

Zero no Tsukaima



The Silver Pentecost / 銀の降臨祭 Volume 7

Noboru Yamaguchi





✦ **ルイズ** ✦
「ゼロのルイズ」と呼ばれる、
伝説の系統「虚無」の使い手。
誇り高く器用で強りな
貴族のお嬢様で、才人のご主人様。

✦ **平賀才人(サイト)** ✦
ルイズの使い魔「ガンダールグ」。
あらゆる武術を扱うことができるが、
武藝がなければただの高校生。
ルイズのことを
可愛いと思っているが……。

ゼロの使い魔

銀の降臨祭 ヤマダチノボル

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ゼロの使い魔7

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銀の降臨祭

ヤマグチノボル

























Chapter 1 – The Temperature Difference between the Two

A young lady with peach-colored hair was lying horizontally on the bed, with only a thin cape wrapped around her bare skin.

She is the one whom they call "Louise of the Void", otherwise known as Louise Françoise, and only a few high ranking officers of the royal army knew of this secret.

It's now the end of the year, the second week in the month of Wein. Going by Halkeginia's climate, it's now the equivalent of autumn... It's still not considered very cold in the tent. Winter will have to wait until the coming of the new year. It's also because of this that she can dress so sexily without the fear of catching a cold.

On a simple bed made up of a piece of cloth draped over straw, Louise bit her small finger, and sulked indignantly. This gesture of hers has an unbelievable cuteness to it. On that porcelain doll-like face of hers surfaced a peach color, arising from discontent. Louise sat up, and hugged her

knee.

This gesture of hers had a cuteness akin to a god's. With her feelings immediately written on her face, Louise cannot hide completely the uneasiness in her heart. This uneasiness caused some sort of dramatic change in Louise's girlish air, adding to it a layer of perfume called "sexiness".

Louise's hands nonchalantly touched her long slender legs beneath the cape.

The fingers touched the toes, and returned to the knees.

Unknowingly, Louise did such a seductive move, even gently tugging the cape covering her upwards- exposing her legs and slim yet sexy thighs- All this, was done unconsciously.

Beneath the cape was her skin, a young maiden's skin now full of charm, due to her passion.

Which is to say, she's wearing nothing. To ask why; that's because Louise only wears pajamas when she sleeps, so since she forgot to bring her pajamas, she had to replace it with a cape and if she were wearing her undies, she would not be able to fall asleep.

Although the sexy and cute pose from Louise is spreading out an irresistible charm...It's a pity that the other person in the tent took no notice of it.

On the back of the cape covering Louise, was the lily emblem of Tristain. This cape was different from the one worn in the academy. The emblem, a way to distinguish friend from foe, clearly indicated that this area was a battleground.

As a female officer directly under Her Highness's command, Louise was assigned her own personal tent. In the military port of Rosais, buildings resembling hostels were rare, so tents were put at every stop. Such treatment was equal to a general's, but since Louise's legendary magic element 'void' was considered to be a last resort, it was normal.

Inside the tent illuminated by a magical lamp, was a simple bed made up of a piece of cloth covering some straw, a foldable dining table, a small cabinet for clothing and accessories and a bell

for ordering the accompanying soldiers. In the battlefield, items like that inside a tent can be considered "luxurious" type.

In a corner of such a tent, Saito was staring blankly in front of him, feeling low.

"Hey, Saito."

No reply.

Louise sat up, and called him again.

"Hey, I'm going to sleep soon. Come here, quickly."

Although Louise was red in the face as she called him, there was still no reaction.

"It's already past 10. We'll have to be up early tomorrow morning to inspect the frontlines. You'd better sleep now."

Even so, there's still no reply from Saito.

This familiar of Louise, who came from another world, was now sitting crossed-legged on the floor, his face full of depression. He was already like this since a week ago. When Louise recalled the battle which caused Saito's depression, she felt a dull pain in her heart.

A week ago, the combined armies of Tristain and Germania successfully occupied this port-town of Albion. As the main force of Albion's armies were attracted to the northern port-town of Talnis, there were only about 500 defenders in Rosais. The landing party, numbering 60,000, effortlessly destroyed the defenders and set up camp in Rosais.

During the enticing of the enemy into battle, Louise's "Void" magic showed its power. The Void spell "Illusion", is a spell that can create huge illusions.

Louise used the "Illusion" spell to create illusions of the combined armies landing in Dartanes, causing the enemy forces en route to Rosais to turn back.

But... in order for Louise and others to reach Dartanes, some sacrifices had to be made. That, was the 2nd Dragon Cavalry Company, attached to "Varsenda", the flagship of the Albion expedition.

It was because of their engagement of enemy forces, that the Zero Fighter carrying Louise and Saito could successfully escape the pursuit by the enemy's dragon cavalry.

The price for this battle's success...was the annihilation of the 2nd Dragon Cavalry Company. Although dragon cavalry were very expensive, compared to the possible losses while landing in enemy territory, this sacrifice can be considered minimal. The commanding officer was even rewarded as a matter of fact! This too, was also something to be happy about.

The thing is, for those who took part in that battle, and witnessed the destruction of the company for themselves, it was an entirely different feeling.

Louise observed Saito, and pouted her lips.

Of course, it was a sad thing that had happened, but...

During the landing battle, there were sacrifices as well. War definitely brings Death along with it. If every death is mourned, there will be no end to it.

In Halkeginia, there were wars almost every single year.

For Louise, although death was something sad, it was also something very close to her.

Louise stood up. Under the dim glow of the magic lamp, the room was rather dark. Under such conditions, even if the cape didn't cover certain areas, the body should still remain unseen.

Louise crossed her hands in front of her, as if hugging herself, and held the hems of the cape tightly.

She walked up to Saito, who's hugging his knees as he sat, and said, "Buck up, alright."

"Emm." Saito grunted lifelessly.

"But, I can't help it. After all, it happened right before my eyes. Although it's for the execution of the mission, still...."

Saito was really down in the doldrums. It was only then that Louise remembered: those teens were about Saito's age.

Saito... he must have projected himself onto them. This kind-hearted boy from another world, with what's going on in his mind being a mystery, must have been hurt by this self-projection.

Just as how Saito had comforted her before, Louise felt that this time, it was her turn to comfort him. But, she didn't know how to go about doing it.

Louise squatted, and sat back-to-back with Saito.

"That.. Although you may find me cruel by saying this.. Compared to the deaths of the company, what makes me sadder is to see you being so depressed. Although I shouldn't be thinking like this, facts are facts. However, maybe because...you are my familiar and were by my side, I really felt very sad."

Saito slowly turned his head, and stared quietly at Louise.

"Death may sadden people.... But that was a glorious death in the battlefield... for honor. They died for a great victory. They're too pitiful if you felt sad about their deaths..."

"Do you mean what you say... regarding this?"

He felt that something was amiss when Louise started talking like this.

"Of course not, but we have to. We're now at war."

Louise's right hand let go of the hem it was holding, and gently patted Saito's forehead, now that he has turned around. Her fingers caressed the streaks of dried tears on his cheeks.

Saito shook his head, and cried.

"I... I didn't even know their names."

Instead of calling it an unbearable pain, it was more of the inability to forgive.

To die for the mission, to die for honor.

He couldn't imagine the feelings at all.

Doesn't Louise understand this?

He recalled Colbert's letter. The teacher wrote: *Never become used to death, never become used to slaughter.*

He was wondering at the time "How is it possible that one could get used to such things?"

As Louise looked at Saito's forlorn face, she felt terrible. What she had just said were not lies. Although she felt sad for those youths who had sacrificed themselves, but they had died for the victory of their country.

Louise, who had grown up receiving the education of the nobility, and Saito, who grew up in Japan on the peaceful Earth: there was an obvious gulf between them.

Louise felt pain seeing Saito's crying face. Compared to mourning the dead, she had a greater desire



to heal the pain of the living. If Saito's tears were a kind of gentleness, then perhaps this can be said to be another type of gentleness.

Louise thought of -

What should one do at a moment like this? How does one comfort a boy who had been hurt?

And...

If it was that maid, what would she do? She used just a little bit of her imagination.

She would....use the warmth of her body! It's all that commoner can come up with.

On this train of thought, she suddenly became angry.

That... that sort of thing... I can do that too!

Recalling that time where he pushed her to the floor, and kissed her a few times on the neck, Louise's face became red at once.

Since at that time, he was being excited all of a sudden (That's how Louise saw it), Louise hadn't forgiven Saito for what he did, definitely not.

He said something about liking her; surely he said it with doing that sort of thing in mind. Once her mind was on this thought, a burst of anger erupted from within her. After that, she couldn't even forgive herself. Although she was affected by the mood at the time, she actually lowered the hand which had risen to slap him.

That means... that is to say....

But, at the back of her mind, Louise shook her head furiously.

That doesn't mean that I've accepted him.

Because he wanted to do it the hard way; he's doing it unconsciously. That's right! Unconsciously!

Although Louise didn't know what "unconsciously" actually meant, she hugged Saito tightly, her face crimson-red. Hugging a familiar is something which isn't supposed to be done, due to the difference in status between the two. Yes... letting him sit beside the dining table could be said to be a form of pity. But, hugging him like this wasn't pity.

Louise shook her head. She thought, "What am I doing?" The incredible thing was that her heartbeat was quickening. Her racing heartbeat seemed to be dissolving the cruel atmosphere of the battlefield.

Despite all this, Saito was still depressed.

Is it still not enough?

Is simply hugging him tightly not enough?

Hoping that he would pucker up didn't mean that she liked him or anything. However, if a familiar was like this, it would affect missions in the future.

Louise intended to try her best at imitating Siesta. She is trying hard, even putting aside her noblewoman's pride. Although she didn't have any other feelings for this familiar, she didn't want to lose in battles, no matter what. However, there was no movement in Saito's vision.

She remembered what she was wearing now. Underneath the cape was her skin.

No undies.

Louise took a deep breath. It's only a tiny bit. If doing this could comfort Saito a little, isn't it worth a try?

No way Louise!

How can you show others your body when you're unmarried?

If you treat him as a familiar, that's still alright. But what are you doing now?

If he sees it, there will be trouble!

You'll have to marry him, those are the rules.

I want to marry?

Marry who?

This familiar?

No way! Impossible! He's a commoner from another world!

Her brain began to fry, as if it was about to explode. Saito stared at Louise in her current predicament, his eyes emotionless.

Sob...now even Louise was feeling down, she really wanted to heal this wound of Saito's.

Does Saito really like me...To think about it, although he did say that he liked me...but that was for taking advantage of me...But does my body have that kind of charm...Aaahhhh! This is frustrating!!

Louise grew more and more confused; her brain was really going to explode soon. Just as she was loosening her grip on her cape.....

Just as the gentleness of the mourner, and the gentleness of the comforter for the living, are about to meet....

Whoosh!

A sudden gust of wind blew the tent away.

"What.. what's going on?"

"What!"

Saito and Louise shouted at the same time.

Looks like something just landed beside the tent.

On a closer look, it was a wind dragon.

On its back, one could see the silhouettes of dragon knights.

"Ene... enemies! The enemies are here!"

Saito grabbed his sword hurriedly. At this, a man peered out from the dragon's back, and said to Saito in a soft voice, "Oh, you're..."

Upon seeing his face, Saito's eyes nearly popped out of their sockets; he was stunned.

"Aaahhh!"

The men sitting on the dragon were the dragon knights that had been thought decimated.

Saito's mouth fell wide open. He asked softly,

"Wh.. Why?"

"It's... a long story."

That was the reply from a plump dragon knight. The rest of the knights bowed their heads, as if in embarrassment.

"We'll talk again later. So...so sorry to have interrupted the two of you..." The plump knight captain said shyly.

Louise, with only a cape covering her, was blankly leaning against Saito.

Louise hurriedly kicked Saito away, and screamed,

"We...we... we didn't do anything!"

Perhaps, it's the miracle caused by this temperature difference between the two types of gentleness.

The dragon knights, thought to be deceased, were standing before them, with not a single man missing.

Besides the dragon which they rode on, the knights lost the rest of their dragon mounts... But no matter, all the men returned safely.

Before Saito and Louise felt relieved, could hardly speak with their mouths now wide open

"You all... Why..."

"No... Well... actually, we aren't sure ourselves."

Seeing the sudden return of the knights, the senior officers in the dragon cavalry's headquarters tent nearly had their eyes popping out of their sockets.

From the day they were annihilated, a week had passed.

Furthermore, this is enemy territory - the land of Albion. Their survival was already written off as hopeless.

Count Kirnumel, the commander of the 2nd Dragon Cavalry Battalion, in charge of three dragon cavalry companies, was the first to open his arms and welcome the return of these warriors, who have miraculously survived.

"Never mind! Regardless, returning alive is something worth being happy about! It really is incredible! A miraculous survival, I say!"

Immediately, applause and cheers rang out inside the tent.

Standing beside Saito and Louise, who brought the whole lot here, a young knight with a shy expression said in a loud, clear voice,

"Actually, even I find it hard to believe myself...even the wounds on our bodies were healed completely!"

A knight took a closer look at the survivors, and exclaimed,

"You're right!"

"Was it the enemy who treated you guys?"

"I... don't know. Regardless, I shall first narrate my personal experience of the battle."

As the leader, the young knight began narrating his report to those in the tent.

The 2nd Dragon Cavalry Company was surrounded by more than a hundred enemy riders...One by one, the riders fell to the enemy's magic attacks.

Almost every knight and dragon mount was severely wounded, and lost consciousness as they plummeted to the ground.

"So, what happened after you guys regained consciousness?"

"At the time, I was already riding on the dragon's back, along with the rest, all the way to Rosais. It's only upon reaching here did I realise that a week had already passed."

"You're saying that you guys have no memory of what happened from the moment you guys were shot down till today?"

The knights looked at each other sheepishly.

"Yes, sir. Absolutely nothing."

"Hey... Don't tell me you guys lost an entire week's memories?"

"That's exactly what happened."

The knights nodded in shame.

"That one remaining dragon mount... Who did it belong to?" Enquired one of the officers.

A knight raised his hand, saying, "It's my Beyael." He was one of the twins. Kirnumel started to focus his attention on the youth.

"What was the situation like at the time?"

"When we got surrounded, I was injured before my mount; my shoulder was hit by a magic missile. Beyael probably wanted to help me escape. So, it pretended to be hit, and flew to a lower altitude."

There is a tinge of shame in his voice, due to the fact that the other knights continued to fight on despite the injuries they and their dragon mounts suffered.

"Since you can no longer fight, it's only logical to leave the battlefield. There's nothing to be ashamed of."

Upon hearing those words from his commander, the lad brightened up immediately.

"Thank you."

Kirnumel touched his moustache. Of course, it's a joyous thing to have the knights back safe and sound.... But, there were too many anomalies, and they were bound to raise suspicions.

Who was it that saved these gravely-wounded dragon knights, healed them, and allowed them to ride on the sole surviving wind dragon to Rosais?

The enemy would surely carry out a search to identify the riders who had been shot down. But, they escaped the search, and returned in one piece.

It could very well be a trap.

Kirnumel ordered the knights to stand in a line, and allowed his subordinates to use magic for a detailed check on these young survivors. He felt that the enemy could be using magic to manipulate them.

But, there were no problems with the results. The youths showed no traces of manipulation on them, and since there was nothing else to ask of them, Kirnumel urged them to retire.

"Since your dragon survived, you shall go under the command of the 1st Company. As for the rest, since you all are without dragons; that cannot be helped."

Kirnumel focused his attention on Louise, whom until now stood by the side blankly, as if she was an outsider. Although her true identity was unknown, his superiors had mentioned that this female officer is sent by the Princess, and knows how to use some unknown but special magic.

Treating her with all due respect - that decree had already been sent from Highest HQ to the rest of the forces.

"Until the replacement dragons arrive, you all shall be Miss la Vallière's guards. Dismissed!"

After leaving the Battalion HQ tent, the plump captain of the 2nd Dragon Cavalry Company immediatly bowed to Saito.

"Now that we are under your command, please guide us along the way."

Saito used his hand to wipe his eyelids, as he hugged the captain.

"I thought you guys were dead."

"No...Come to think about it, I forgot something, so I can't possibly die that easily."

"Forgot something?"

Saito asked, a stunned expression on his face.

The plump knight smiled

"I haven't introduced myself. I'm Rene Vonke, a dragon knight of Tristain. Nice to meet you."

Saito also introduced himself.

"I'm Hiraga Saito."

"That's a strange name you have there." Said Rene, while laughing.

Saito, who looked as if he's about to cry, laughed and said, "Then, let us drink our fills tonight, to celebrate all of you returning safely!"

Saito and company went into Louise's tent, and the party began in there. Perhaps, the survivors were just glad to be alive, and drank and drank. And before long, they were drunk.

Before anyone knew it, the only two sober souls around were Saito and Rene.

Due to the wind dragon blowing the tent away a while back, the top had a gash on it. From the crack, one can see the stars and the moon. The cool night wind entered the tent. Saito shivered.

"But, I didn't expect you to get so depressed. No...sorry for letting you worry..." said Rene gravely.

"It's because of you guys that my familiar was feeling down the entire day. It was really, really bad!"

A while back, Louise chided them. Upon hearing Louise's words, they said, "What a strange fellow!" Then, everyone roared with laughter. Saito couldn't understand at all why they laughed.

Louise, after hollering for a good while, was now sleeping on Saito's knee, probably tired out from her shouting.

"Is it so weird for me to be depressed?"

Hearing Saito's words, Rene grinned,

"Wouldn't there be no end to it?"

"No end to it? What do you mean?"

Saito retorted with his own question. Rene drank a mouthful of grape wine straight from the bottle, his plump cheeks now red from the wine. He said solemnly,

"Are we not at war now? If you're going to grieve over every single stranger, wouldn't there be an end to it?"

"We're no strangers; I talked with you guys before. If someone died while protecting you, you will definitely feel sad! You guys are the ones with strange ideas!"

Saito downed a mouthful of wine. Rene, with a somewhat serious look, said

"We didn't serve as bait in order to protect you two. We're protecting the battle plan, and our own honour."

"What do you mean?"

"Back then, the orders we received were to escort you guys to Dartanes at all cost. Ensuring the success of this battle will mean the protection of the entire royal army, equivalent to a blood oath of loyalty to Her Highness. As long as our loyalty to Her Highness is recognized, the prestige of our clans will increase. Even if I die, the glory will continue on."

This is crazy.

"Hey, don't spout nonsense like that! Maybe, you're a commoner. That's why you're not aware of this, but to nobility, the so-called "honor" is something which is more important than life itself."

"Geez. Thankfully, I'm not some nobleman." "Exactly. Compared to being born into petty nobility, it's much more comfortable being a commoner!"

"Petty nobility?"

"That's right. Unlike those counts and earls, for each generation, we have to survive on a pitifully small salary. No wealth equals no fancy decor, and no pride. If we want to escape that, the only way is to work hard in the battlefield, and gain the recognition of our superiors. If one's achievements in the war is recognized, he'll be granted a fiefdom as a reward. So, everyone rabidly puts his life on the line. They have no time to worry about the danger of death. Huu..."

Saito closed his eyes and thought for a while.

"But, if you die, wouldn't it be all over? Why do you noblemen drop terms like 'death' and 'honour' so casually? Are you guys idiots?"

No answer. After a closer look, it turns out that Rene had already fallen asleep.

"Guluuu..." "What the... He fell asleep after saying his piece."

Really, these so-called "nobility" are a bunch of stubborn fellows. Louise is also like that. She said herself that "I'll definitely help you find a way to get home." But, once the war began, her attention became entirely focused on it.

He actually followed Louise all the way to this; was he out of his mind?

...For what am I fighting like this, even putting my life on the line?

A few reasons popped up in his mind.

He wanted to lend a hand to the pitiful Henrietta.

He wanted to protect Siesta's hometown, for the girl had always cared for him.

But, the most important reason of all... is that he's worried about Louise.

That's probably it... he thought, as he looked at this young lady with peach-coloured hair, who's sleeping on his knee. To put it plainly, it's because he loves her. That's why he's always worried.

Louise is really cute, and he really wanted to feel her. But, he'll have to hold back for now, as everyone's here.

Ah, but will his feelings be reciprocated?

Whether this relationship will have an outcome, perhaps only God himself knows. The God of Earth...or the gods of this different world....who should he ask for the answer?

Thinking about this, Saito immediately shook his head.

Am I an idiot... Why am I thinking about such silly questions?

It was then that he recalled what Louise had said just now.

Death may sadden people.... But that was a glorious death in the battlefield... for honor. They died for a great victory. They're too pitiful if you felt sad about their deaths...

He had a very strong distaste for this. It felt unnatural.

At the same time, he felt that Louise, who's sleeping on his lap, is getting further and further away from him. She's just in front of me...why do I have this feeling?! He couldn't fathom the reason for it at all.

Huu...Let's sleep... thought Saito, allowing Louise to continue using his leg as a pillow as he lay down to sleep.

All the while, the bright moonlight from the two moons beamed down upon him, as if to comfort him and his many troubles...



Chapter 2 – Fairy [PREVIEW]

Today is the third day of the miraculous return of the dragon knights. Rene and Saito, along with the rest, were partying in the tent all this while.

Ever since that party, Rene and the other members of the 2nd Dragon Cavalry Company had been making a fool of themselves at Louise's tent everyday. Them being so-called "guards" was merely an excuse; in reality, they were there for other reasons.

"Cheers! To our miraculous survival!"

Saito lifted a 17th toast of the day, delivered in a half-drunken stupor.

"Cheers! Cheers!"

Slurry voiced dragon knight's cacophonous chorus joined in. Again, the lot emptied their cups, filled to the brim with grape wine, in one gulp.

"It's great to be alive. You could still drink like this!"

Said Rene's deputy, a crimson-haired youth named

Matthew Pennterdon, as he casually waved his wand, creating a mini whirlwind to stir the wine. As the third son of a petty noble family, he always drank in a miserly manner - diluting the wine with water before drinking it. So, he would occasionally use magic in this manner to stir his cup.

That pair of attention-grabbing twin dragon knights, were called Gilbert and Siegfried. With soft, pale golden hair and cute maiden-like faces, these two came from a noble family which had fallen into ill times. They helped each other to fill up the cups with wine, while grinning away.

Besides Louise, the rest were already dead drunk. No.... one of them seemed to have some sort of troubles, and was in deep thought. He's the somewhat taciturn Fernan. When Saito toasted him, he merely shook his head. Looks like he has some kind of worry in his mind.

At this point, the plump Rene showed up, hugging a sack full of stuff.

"Captain of the 2nd Dragon Cavalry Company, Rene Vonke, has returned!"

"Hat's off. It's been hard on you."

Saito, who was sitting in the center seat, burst into laughter, with dragon knight's following him

Sitting in the nook of the tent and hugging her knees, Louise could only watch such spectacle in frustration.

What is it with this bunch?

Simply put, they are treating the place as if it's their room. Pretending to guard but coming here just to booze, away from the pry eyes of senior officers. Here they could do whatever they wanted.

Louise bit her lip in hatred. Of course, it wasn't easy for them to escape death, a little wine for celebration would still be tolerable.

But...

They were doing this every day! EVERY SINGLE DAY! And it was from dawn to dusk!

And these fellows have absolutely no idea on how to keep a room clean! Louise's grinding of her teeth became very audible. Bottles, bones of fowl and leftover scraps were scattered everywhere; the sight of it all was unbearable.

Whenever she complained, she got a chirpy "Okayyyyy!" in reply, but that was all. No one cleaned up the mess. As a result, the rubbish grew by the day, along with Louise's frustration.

Saito was the most unforgivable one. Initially, she thought that he'd warn them on Louise's behalf. Instead, that idiot began leading the racket, and is now the "highest commander". "An absolute general of fools, how fitting for him," thought Louise, as she sighed.

"Status report!" said Saito, who really thought that he had become a general. Rene noisily opened the sack.

"Smoked ham, dried meats, sausages... and wine!"

Upon seeing all the food that was handily "taken" from the warehouse, everyone cheered at once.

"Now, I shall decorate this officer with a medal..."

But, he has no medals with him. Just as Saito was being troubled by this, someone stuffed something into his hand. It was a light, pure white piece of fabric.

"Wha-what is this?"

Having figured out what that "something" really was, Louise hastily rose to her feet.

"Hey! That's my underwear! What are you guys thinking?!"

"Ah, because it was left there," said Matthew, who was the one who passed it to Saito.

"There...there's plenty over here," hollered the trembling Gilbert and Siegfried, as they opened Louise's wardrobe.

"This's the best medal ever!" One by one, the knights laughed.

"Lowest! You truly are the lowest!"

Blushing Louise hit Gilbert's head and Siegfried's chest with the wine bottle, threw out poultry bone at rolling Renes, and all other drunken dragon knights were kicked and hit.

Lastly, she kicked flustered Saito between the groins, and sat riding on his neck.

"Constantly making noise! Habit of a familiar! That's the status of the familiar! D-d-dogs status! Dogs! Suiting status!"

Turning around the social standings. Irresponsible thoughts.

"Can't be, so you are her familiar!" Rene and others watched Louise's and Saito's flustered faces and started laughing out loudly again.

"Person – a familiar, weird story!"

Rene and others summoned "Pon!". And many familiars jumped into the tent. Because they were wind system mages, most of their familiars were winged... Owl, taka, flying fox...small griffon and hippogriffon, even phantom beast's figure could be seen.

"These are the familiars! Aahahaha!"

"Don't think I l-love this guy or anything! This idiot came on his own!"

"Well, Summon servant doesn't let you choose the partner!"

Rene, while laughing, approached Louise and said.

"However, you, Miss Valliere, summoned a boyfriend. The familiar and the lover in one, might be ideal for a mage!"

The dragon knights burst out laughing.

“He is not my lover! Idiot! All idiots! How can’t you understand!”

Then Matthew said grinning.

“How about the other day, hmm?”

“You very naked under the mantle! What about that!”

Even Louise's neck crimsoned.

“Ribaldry! Lowest! Boys of your age shouldn’t have thoughts like this!”

At last, Louise grabbed the blanket and put it over her head.

Even after calming down she won’t come out. Was pretending to sleep.

“Spicy. I wonder why she is so angry?”

Rene muttered anxiously. After that they all simultaneously looked for Saito's reaction.

And Saito... had a worried frown on his face.

Where do we stand?

What is our relationship now?

Familiar and master, however it seemed that their relationship progressed...

But did it really progress?

However, that time in the shallop, they became close when he called for Louise. But what does Louise really think of me?

He felt uneasy.

“We didn’t mean any harm, sorry buddy.”

“A, aah” With mixed feelings, Saito nodded.

Rene and others exchanged looks.

“Ribaldry has been said.”

“It can't be helped. We are lower class nobles.” Matthew said.

“It happens to peerage as well! But Miss la Valliere called it ribaldry and was annoyed! Aahahaha!” Siegfried and Gilbert laughed into each others' faces.

Indeed, thought Saito. Children in Academy of magic are all young nobles and ladies. They are all from high-status families like Louise’s, and even though Guiche’s and Montmorency’s families had financial problems, Guiche’s father was still a field marshal, and a field marshal is very respected within the military, right?

Louise and the others study in a private, prestigious school which is very different from public schools.

Aah, so that’s why I felt so close to these guy's from the beginning, Saito thought.

Then he recalled Rene's words.

He said, that you can only advance in ranks through war field. Feeling sympathy, Saito sobered in a moment.

“Ha, drinking certainly makes me happy, after a great deed!” Said Rene.

“That’s right! Dragon knight second unit even wingless will show how great they are!”

“Aahaha” Gilbert and Siegfried neighed.

“Aaah, when will we finally attack Albion’s army in Londonium? It has been ten days since we landed!”

Matthew said impatiently.

That’s right. There were no marching signs from the Allied Forces. Seems like they are waiting for an Albion army to come to Rosais where they could repulse them... But Albion army didn’t seem to move either.

At that time... the dragon knight's wish seemed to come true, as a single child soldier came to the tent.

“Haah, an order from the dragon knight battalion headquarters.”

The boy seemed to be thirteen years old. He had a frighten look on his face seeing vulgar senior nobles with mess all around.

“Battalion headquarters? What good are dragon knights without dragons?”

Rene sarcastically asked.

“I do not know. I am just reporting orders...”

What duties could they be given? Gilbert grumbled, and everyone, now with a serious look, started cleaning after themselves.

* * *

But... unfortunately for the dragon knights, it was not about getting a chance to prove themselves. Rene, who ran into the tent with his sword ready, after seeing yawning earl Ginnumer, lost any kind of expectations.

“Forget about the report. For now, please tell the story of your returning alive.”

Saito and Louise also came. Mostly because they could not leave without their ‘guards’.

Rene, in a not very motivated voice, began the report. Most of it was the same as the time he spoke the other day.

They were shot, they fell... one week later, they all awoke on the dragon’s back. That’s it.

A certainly mysterious story. However, during the war in magic using Halkeginia, unexpected things happen a lot. Because of war, no one really cared about it.

However, Louise quietly listened to that story. Seems it caught her interest.

Well, when it comes to an end...

A single boy started speaking hesitantly.

It was an obedient Fernand. He, after making a thoughtful face, said words.

“T-that...”

“Whats wrong Fernand, do you want to go to the bathroom?”

Matthew teased. Making the boy flustered.

“T-that’s not it! Report! Stop making fun!”

Because the always obedient Fernand had a serious look on his face everyone fell silent.

“W-well... I cannot say for sure if it was illusion or reality the other day...but when I calmly think

about it, but that..."

"What's the matter? Give a brief report." Said Ginnumner.

"Ye-yes! Report! When crashed I was thrown out from the back of the dragon... and laid on the ground for a while. Not moving anything... the body was paralytic. Ha ha, I thought I was about to die... But then, I saw."

Ginnumner, seemed not to be in a mood for this, and urged him on.

"What?"

The boy, in doubt for a moment whether to say or not, muttered hesitatingly.

"It was a fairy."

"What kind of fairy? Water? Then it was a spirit."

"It's different! It was not that flabby! It was... more beautiful! Fairy of the wind!"

"Fairy of the wind does not exist. Fairies, unlike the spirits of the dead, are legendary living beings."

"I do not understand myself! But, I know was a fairy..."

"How did it look like?"

"Very beautiful...girl. With beautiful blond hair... her body shone. No doubt, it was a fairy! An ancient fairy!"

Everyone scorned at Fernand words.

Then.

"Beautiful blond hair, like mine?"

A clear voice said. The voice sounded so sweet that at first it was hard to tell if it belonged to a man or woman.

A tall, blond boy entered the tent. Saito's and Louise's eyes were drawn at once to that beautiful boy. The second dragon knight troops made unpleasant faces.

"What do you want to say about your blond hair, Romalian?"

"Please remember my name first – Julio Cesar."

The name seems manly. A handsome dragon knight, who introduced himself as Julio, after gracefully bowing to Ginnumner, reported.

"The third dragon knight unit, returned from the patrol flight."

Ginnumner nodded with a smile.

"Was the first unit successful?"

"Yes."

"Well then, take some rest."

"Certainly."

The knight made a soft bow.

Julio looked around the tent. This reminded Saito of the similar antipathy he felt towards Wardes when they first met. Huuh, he really did not like this fellow.

Well anyway, it is not surprising. Though Guiche was lady-killer, he was different. Was he a woman? He looked like one, with those thin and slender, appealing lips. Long eyelashes that created a beautiful shadow. While listlessly rolling the around his thin finger covered with white gloves, he

looked around the tent.

Seeing Saito, in surprise he stopped playing with his hair.

Though the left eye of the boy who introduced himself as Julio were same color as Louise's...the right eye that had been mostly hidden by his hair was crystal blue. In other words - the colors of his right and left eyes were different.

He smiled at Saito.

"Is it so weird that the color of my eyes is different?"

"N-no..." he blushed instinctively. What was that, he is a man, Saito tried persuade himself.

"Then don't feel so shy looking at it."

He said not bashfully at all. In fact he was smiling and grinning, seemingly enjoying the reaction of Saito. Foxy guy, Saito thought.

"Talking about abnormalities. You are the rumored familiar Saiton-kun, right?"

"Saito."

In a hoity-toity gesture waved it away and introduced himself. He bowed gracefully.

"Sorry! I was being rude! I am a Shinto priest of Romalia, Julio Cesar. I was looking forward to meet you... Because human being a familiar is very rare. I wanted to meet you at least once... Ah, and you..."

Noticing Louise, Julio took off his cool mask, and gave a wide smile. It was an innocent smile, just like a bloomed flower.

"And you are Miss Valliere? As rumored! You are very beautiful!"

Louise's mouth opened agape, while he took her hand and placed it at his lips.

Saito trembled.

Just whose hand you think you are kissing? Get away, this is mine. My master.

Saito tried to calm himself down. Louise, having a mouth pressed to her hand so suddenly, won't let it slide. The kick will fly, the punch will fly, and a lot of blood will gush out. Saito stared in anticipation... but nothing flew at all.

Instead

"You shouldn't." She cast her eyes down, with a blush on her cheeks, and said shyly.

Saito was in a cold sweat.

What's with reaction?

He was reminded of Wardes. He remembered that Louise was weak against such charm. Saito felt like throwing up.

"It is inexcusable! To discover such beauty outside Romalia, in the middle of the war! I was born just to meet such beauty! Mavelous!"

He was talking rubbish like Guiche. Saito's shoulders trembled. He was also angry at Louise for not taking offense at this rascal's actions.

"Are Shinto priests allowed to touch women like that? Is it common between Romalia people..."



Instead of Saito, it was Matthew who said it with a scowl. Seems like Julio wasn't very popular among second dragon knight unit members.

"Since I was going into the war, I received a temporary secular life permission from the pope."

"That's sophistry."

"I would call it expedience. A priest's privilege. However, what you said is true. Miss, I am sorry. My body was not contained by my priesthood, and reacted on its own after seeing a charming woman."

Reverting back to joking tone, he teasingly smiled and bowed to Louise.

"But... though leading our way god is a great being, he sometimes mercifully closes his eyes. I am looking forward to seeing you every day."

Foppish like a fool.

However... the way he acts. Though Guiche is a lady-killer and foppish, he tries to escape the relationship. However, this fellow doesn't have such gap. Compared to Wardes, who felt cold somehow, this fellow was strangely friendly. Saito understood it from the instinct.

This guy was a real flirt.

Without weaknesses either.

Then Julio put on a serious face again. Such sudden change of mood, only made him feel more hateful towards the man. Saite chewed on his handkerchief in anger.

"The story before. Were you telling the truth about that fairy?"

Fernand nodded.

"Y-yeah."

"Can you show where you were shot down?"

Julio pointed at the map of the Albion continent spread on the table and asked.

Rene answered.

"Certainly... about one hour of flight from the continent border..."

He pointed at the corner of the map.

Interested, Julio nodded.

"Hmm, near South Gotha."

At that time, Ginnumer coughed.

"Maybe it's time for you to take care of your dragon." Julio spread his hands out, "I envy those who do not have to take care after a dragon", and after leaving this sarcastic message, he left. Everyone from the second dragon knight division, who lost their dragons in battle, watched Julio's back in hatred.

* * *

"Who is that foppish rascal?"

When Saito, who went out of the dragon knight battalion headquarters, asked, Rene frowned.

"He is a Shinto priest from Romalia. Shinto priests shams to be dragon knights... disgusting."

“Romalia?”

Dumbfounded Saito asked.

“You don’t know Romalia?”

He asked, surprised. Saito shook his head. Saito who was not from this world, was not aware about the countries and local places. However, because telling that he was from different world would be very troublesome, he came up with an excuse.

“I am from the east... From Rob Al Kaiire.”

“Hee! So you come from the land that always quarrels with elves!”

Have you passed the ground where elves live?! He was surprised. Apparently, in this world, elves are frightening and seemed to be a belligerent race. Moreover, they are on bad terms with humans.

“Romalia is a ‘religious authority’ country, that manages buddhist temples in Halkeginia and some other countries. It is a country where there are a lot of Shinto priests, who are domineering, even more than nobles.”

“Romalia’s Shinto priests, because of the God servant status, can travel abroad freely.”

Though they are nobles, their attitude was just as haughty.

“Can Shinto priests conjure too?”

“Sure!” one noble shouted.

“If he is born in noble's house, where the magic is practiced, then he still carries the same blood even turning into Shinto priest... In case he is a commoner, naturally, he cannot use magic.”

“Julio comes from commoners”, someone said.

Ahh, he was not a mage.

“Then why is a guy like him riding a dragon? And on top of that is a Unit commander!”

“Aah, for a commoner he is abnormally good at riding dragons.”

“It’s really mortifying” one muttered.

“It is said that even though he is not a mage, dragons listen to him. I do not know if it’s true though.”

“Because of it he became earl’s Ginnum’s favorite, and was made into commander of the third unit. Because a third unit is a foreign legion, it is unprecedented career! Because a priest became dragon knight commander, dragon knights became a laughing stock of other troops!”

Saito continued the talk, but was stopped by the officer with a wand who entered the tent.

“Hey, hey! Do not sit around and talk in here! Nuisance! Nuisance!”

Saito and others looked at each other.

“Let’s return to Miss Valliere’s tent. That’s where our place is.”

Then, remembering Louise, Saito turned around.

Louise stood there alone *Haaaah* with a dreamy expression on her face

Saito became suspicious.

Why is Louise making such face?

Then he remembered.

Uh! Could it be because of Julio?

By that handsome dragon knight?

No, that Shinto priest?

Eeeh, whatever you call him!

Anyway since awhile ago, that blush hasn't leave her face...

Saito began to burn with jealousy.

She is making such face just because her hand was kissed! What a woman. Unfaithful! Unfaithful! Though not being a lover himself, Saito cursed.

This is certainly 'wrong'. Just because she was complimented by that beautiful face!

What about my love confession.

No...Why? He thought for a moment...

Something flashed in Saito's head.

He recalled the last party with Rene and others. 'Louise and I, what relationship do we have now?' and his doubt increased.

Before, at Louise's home, she talked about 'Rewarding the loyalty' even though I confessed.

Then...if you think about it...

The war has started now and we were in haste, and I was depressed in a room, thinking that everyone died...

When you think about it very well...

Maybe this is a rejection?

I thought I was favored or kind of accepted...but when you think about it...is it an acceptance?

Loyalty reward. That's what it was.

In other words...

He was rejected.

Saito felt like he was hit by a hammer. He kneeled down on one knee and shook his head. Rene, seeing Saito in such state, asked uneasily.

"H-hey...Saito?"

However, others' words would not have reached Saito.

He was completely lost in his own world.

Then came despair and anger.

Be damned 100 times for being so cute.

Aaah, for this woman's wishes I went into the war that I did not want.

What for was I trying so hard and risked my life.

Cuuurse you.

Guilty! Cuuuuuuurse you!

Anger towards Louise whirled violently. Like lava that gushed out of the volcano it washed away the sensible man in him.

Hiraga's private trial was opened and the decision was given in two seconds.

Defendant – Queen's attorney, court lady Louise Francoise Le Blanc De La Valliere

Presiding judge – me.

Ahhn, guilty! Guilty! Go to circumstances consideration room!

Presiding judge's word

Following society regalement this man here said ‘I like you♪ Lets start from friend love♪’” but the answer was...

T!H!I!S!

‘Loyalty reward’

‘You may touch only one place you like the most’

You are not allowed to touch the master in public.

My dog. Not a dog. Ah, still a dog.

But yet you say a dog. And then not a dog.

Then, he recalled the other day in the Louise’s tent

He thought Rene was dead and was sad, he dully was not even able to understand, that she was only wearing a mantle on her naked body. T-this woman is an idiot! Can’t she understand the feelings of a man?

Presiding judge Hiraga, based Articles 3 of love between man and woman, gives a verdict to the defendant.

Verdict – ignore.

Starting from now.

Saito began to walk ignoring Louise.

* * *

After leaving dragon knight’s headquarters tent, the story and the beautiful boy made Louise’s mind confused.

Somehow she felt uneasy.

When she saw him she felt a strange uneasiness.

Was she startled because it was a beautiful boy?

Somewhat. Louise was a girl in her puberty and she did not hate beautiful boys. But to put it simply she did not thought of him as a lover. Only one boy occupies her thoughts for the time, even though she wasn’t fully aware of it, other boys even with a ‘nice face’, failed to move in there.

The resident though, was constantly making the landlord angry.

This uneasiness was part of the natural appeal.

And this uneasiness was not only because of that.

It was the ‘fairy’ that one of the dragon knights witnessed. Though it would be easy to laugh it off as a dream... they all have actually lost the memory for one week. Their carefree attitude of not worrying about anything after returning alive, made Louise annoyed.

But that’s because they are soldiers, she thought, they cannot think about every little thing in the middle of the war.

While thinking about the true colors of the uneasiness... Louise came back to herself.

Heyhey, where is Saito's going.

Louise was ignored.

With dragon knight's boys laughing in a weird laugh laughed, and started to drink alcohol again, disregarding Louise. That idiot, just now, why was he laughing so unnaturally?

Was he trying to ignore me for a joke?

And to discuss things while drinking again?

Whatwhat! Don't joke around.

"Hey, wait!"

But Saito did not turned to her call. He did not heard? This time she shouted.

"Saito! Wait! Escort your master to the tent properly~!"

However, he ignored.

Heh? What! What is this!

Saito didn't even turn around. The distance can't be too big. He should have...heard me.

Louise started to boil with anger towards Saito. Such behavior by the partner (sealed with Louise) made the pink-blond girls temper explode.

One can't blame such short Louise's temper. When you are in love with someone, even the smallest things can be damaging and easily make one happy or angry.

Though Louise wasn't aware of her love, it was 100% pointing at Saito. Thus even his slightest action could easily make her angry.

Hey! I haven't even offended this guy! And yet I am ignored!

Stop ignoring my words!

Clenching her hands into fists, Louse kicked a stone on the road away.

* * *

Noticing raging Louise, Rene turned to Saito and whispered.

"Isn't she your master? Are you angry at her? Why do you ignore her?"

Saito looked at Louise.

Louise was angry. She was raging on the road.

Angry at being ignored by her familiar. That's understandable. I am just a familiar anyway. Yes yes.

Aaah, that's right. Its impossible for humble noble-sama to fall in love with the familiar.

Saito almost cried, while thinking so.

He wanted to cry bitterly, letting Rene to comfort him.

But... Saito choked the tears down.

What girl do you think Louise is. Noble girl.

You have to be gentle.

Saito clasped fists and looked up at the night sky.

The star was blinking ...beautiful.

And two moons hone...like in a dream.
Aaah, the moon-star, please wash away this ugly jealousy of mine.
Yes. I am a man right?
I should ignore in anger... after all.
Then, Saito, thinking so, gave a cramp smile.
I am honorable man, he tried to persuade himself while trembling.
He thought already beaten with cold sweat.
But when he turned with concession to say "...ah, Louise come over"...
But then surprisingly!
Louise looked the other way.
"Come over here, right"
With her arms crossed and puffing her cheeks, she turned away.
Wh-what's this!?
Disgusting. Even now this woman is treating him coldly..
But this time, it wasn't usual Louise's angry attitude.
But... this time Loise's face looked uncomfortable.
Is this all that Louise thinks of me? Uncomfortable.
Such Louise attitude was over-reacting.
Saito turns around around and began to walk away quickly.
"Hey what is this? You must be joking."
Rene looked anxiously between Saito and Louise... and then, ran after Saito.

* * *

Louise, left behind, trembled with anger.
She bellowed towards the direction where Saito left.
"What was that! Come over here!"
And waited for a while. But ... he was not coming back.
Wha-w-w-what a selfish thing!
Louise was really pissed off.
Even though I feel insecure in the middle of the war...
I am being exploited... And what kind of compassion do I get?
Saito seemed to completely not in the mood to explain anything.
Steadily, her eyes grew teary. L-lately she just wanted to escape it all.
Separately, well, that's ok. Bad, but it's ok. I'll forgive him. That boy is like that, can not be helped.
I don't like him, really, I don't like, aah, maybe a little.
Louise shook her head.

Don't think. No good. Absolutely no good.

Honestly, well, he said he likes me, she thought.

However, what is this 'Love'. Is it true?

But if it's love why he does treat me so coldly? She could not understand.

Besides, he would not be hanging with that maid.

Really he must be saying that to all girls. Idiot. Not only to the maid.

He said 'love' to me as well.

Inexcusable. Fibber. Dislike. Dislike.

"That's enough" Louise muttered while biting her lips.



Chapter 3 – The Shinto Priest of Romalia [PREVIEW]

The Tristain and Germania united army landed in the port town Rosais, which is located about 300 leagues to south from the Albion capital Londonium (One league, turned in Saitos' worlds unit, would be almost one kilometer).

Immediately after landing; Allied Forces expected the enemy's counterattack. First of all, land units formed a circle around Rosais.

Yet... Albion made no counterattack.

The most supreme commander of the united army De Poitiers, lost the momentum to invade. They were to have set up the strategy, expecting for the enemy to attack after the landing. The 'decisive battle' ought to happen near Rosais, which would let them to destroy enemy's large army in one blow and march to Londonium in a dash.

They planned for the campaign to be over in three weeks, until the Yara's month begins... In other words, before the advent festival of Founder

Brimir which is 'New Year's Day' in Londonium comes.

In other words, a short-term decisive battle was planned.

This cannot be helped now. A large amount of food is necessary to maintain the large army of 60,000 people. The specific medicine (Especially, the water element based recovery medicine) to recite strong spells, war materials like bullets, gunpowder and the cannons are needed. And it all had to be carried from their own country, to the army in the front.

Fighting a long war in the enemy's territory, would be nothing but a nightmare. Besides, Tristain's economy made such long war impossible.

Albion main army successfully retreated from Dartanes, barricaded in the capital Londonium now.

Apparently, the enemy army evaded fighting a decisive battle. In a word, after Albion air force received damage beyond imagination, and lost the sky control, the Albion army might have abandoned the counterattack tactics.

Allied forces were prepared for the Albion's attack.

But because the expectations went down the drain and concrete damage did not occur, constructing positions and preparing for decisive battle became. Allied forces wasted food for one and a half week.

Allied Forces could not plan anything but a short-term decisive battle, so they only took food supply for six weeks. But now it became necessary to carry food and gunpowder from their own country by ship. For the two countries that organize the expedition army with very limited finances, the situation was worrisome.

It was the eight day after the landing and the tensed atmosphere... surrounded the future plans of the invasion.

Air base in Rosais, Royal Albion Air Headquarters and the sacred Albion republic air force

headquarters, and a Tristain Germania united martial army command base now, these walls of red bricks changed masters three times in one year. A great hall within the second floor was where the history was made.

At the round table, on the central seat, the supreme commander of coalition forces, General de Poitiers, sat. He was listening to two different opinions.

First one came from Germanian general, Marquis Handenburg, who insisted upon a short-term decisive while shaking his fist and white mustache.

“Let’s march! March! March! We have food only for four and a half weeks. Make a detour at a fort on the way and march to the castle! Anyway, let’s aim to Londonium. Fortunately, we control the sky. We have to end the war before the Founder Brimir’s advent festival, as the morale will drop after advent festival!”

Seems like Germania’s general insisted upon advancing like a flame.

“Ending before the advent festival, but I wonder why there are no such short war endings in Halkeginia’s history?”

Wimpffen, chief of general staff, objecting coldly staring through the pane of his glasses.

“Then, we’ll create a precedent.”

Said Marquis Handenburg giving a piercing glare to Wimpffen.

“By circling Londonium we would expose our back to their castles....We can’t act without strategy. Moreover, if we start marching the supply lines would be left behind. Without supply we would end up in a deadlock. Though it is troublesome we should proceed carefully, step-by-step. We should advance capturing fortresses and castles before marching.”

“Capturing fortresses or castles would inflict too much damage! Supply? We only have to take over Londonium before advent festival!”

“As the marquis said, we control the sky, right. So the damage upon capturing will be suppressed to minimum. Londonium taken over by the advent festival? That’s nonsense!”

Marquis Handenburg said with a face full of contempt.

“...this is ‘wind’ element thinking, wind that cowardly evades obstacles.”

“As if ‘fire’, which hastily out-burns itself, element thinking is any better.”

Two people stared each other.

“Courage is what cowardly Tristainians need to be taught.”

“There’s nothing to learn from barbarians.”

They both pulled out their wands at the same time. Supreme general De Poitiers stepped in between them.

“We argue too much! Marquis! Marquis! Show germanian courage in the battlefield! Wimpffen! Stop disgracing yourself!”

At last, they both calmed down.

“For now we have to admit that the first plan, beating Albion main forces and then advancing to Londonium, getting Cromwell’s head and rising white lily’s flag in Whitehall, failed. Yet advancing through war according to plan is still possible.”

After overthrowing the Albion revolution government, they will rule in the name of Henrietta. Of course, part of the territory will be ceded to Germania. Afterwards, Albion royal family’s remaining alive survivors will be searched out and placed in the throne of the territory under Tristain’s rule,

thus reviving the monarchy. To avoid possible revolutions they decided to look for surviving Albion's royal family members, once a suitable noble with royal blood is found, the throne will be passed to him.

De Poitiers shook his head, trying to brush off this imagination from the thoughts.

It's not the time to think about it. Right now they need to think how to annihilate the enemy.

De Poitiers bit his lip. Anyway, my promotion hangs on this.

If he would win this war he would become a field marshal.

Everything could have been easily settled by one decisive battle... De Poitiers felt a grudge against the Albion army. Why did Cromwell barricade himself in Londonium and doesn't go out?

What about the country being infringed by the enemy?

What about facing ministers, nobles and public opinion?

What is he counting on?

While being lost in his thoughts, he noticed the ally general and the chief of the general staff looking worried at him, De Poitiers announced the strategy plan by himself.

"...there is no decisive battle anymore, but the plan must be executed anyway. We have to take over Londonium Emperor's palace Havilland and rise Her Majesty's flag there. Now, it would be too dangerous to attack Londonium directly. And capturing castle after castle could take decades."

The marquis and the chief of the general staff nodded frowningly. De Poitiers showed the map that had been expanded on the table and pointed at the place between Rosais and Londonium.

"The City of South Gotha. An ancient town, favorite tourist spot. We will take it over and turn it into the foothold for Londonium capture. We will leave 5000 soldiers here in Rosais to secure the supply and the retreat path. The remaining troops will participate in capture with the support from the air forces. If the enemy's main army comes out, we will bring it to the decisive battle, of course."

The marquis and the chief of the general staff nodded. It was a compromised proposal, though it was a noncommittal strategy plan, it wasn't bad.

South Gotha is a big town. The crossing of all roads. If it is taken, it becomes possible to be effective against other castles and towns. Even if the war is not settled before the advent festival, it would be easy to hold out longer as it is a big city.

At that time when the strategy was decided someone knocked the door.

"Who?" asked guard.

"Me. Her Majesty's court lady, La Valliere."

De Poitiers signaled the guards to let her in. Even though he wasn't particularly eager to let the girl take part in army business, but he can't treat her unkindly as she was Her Majesty's court lady and the user of the legendary 'Void'. Even though it may be offending and bothersome.

De Poitiers saw Louise as nothing more than a 'tool'.

"Aah, Miss Void. We have prepared a gorgeous tent for you. Leave all the trouble to servicemen and take a rest. I will call you if you are needed.

Louise was nervous about the great surroundings. However, she can't do what she decided to if she acts cowardly. So she gathered her courage and spoke out

"W-well..."

"What? Oh, you were not rewarded for your work at Dartanes. As expected of Void. You did well.

Gentlemen! Applause!“

Indifferent applause echoed in the conference room.

“I will request for the royal family reward.”

“N-no that...”

“What? Are you still here?”

De Poitiers tone became diluted with dour.

Is a single reward not enough? What a greedy chit!

That human beings are greedy, it is one of the basic habits of human beings. De Poitiers felt offended that after praising her Louise wanted more.

“It is different. Umm, I did not come here to get a reward. It’s about the dragon knights who returned alive...”

Generals for a moment could not understand what she was talking about... But then they remembered the dragon knight unit that returned alive and nodded.

“Aah, what about it?”

“Well... though it’s great, don’t you think it’s strange? A whole week passes after the crash and they returned safe and sound... Moreover, they don't remember anything in between?”

“Indeed.”

Annoyed generals listened to her. How was it effecting the army? They were about to say it.

“It’s a place near South Gotha. I think it should be investigated.”

When Louise said so general waved his hand.

“Oh, OK. Near the marching route. Search expedition will be organized to investigate the mystery.” he said in a dull tone not really believing in such expedition.

“Did they hit their heads and saw some kind of ghost?”

“...they reported it was a fairy.”

“A kind fairy!”

Someone said and the conference room was wrapped up in laughter. It does not matter whom she would ask. The ten surviving knights were just another war miracle and they would not explore it even if the knights minds were clear.

“No way! What if behind it lies an important secret?! Something that might change the flow of war!”

“Miss, though it certainly is a mysterious event, it is not likely to change such a grand situation. We do not have time to care about such trivial matters.”

“But...”

Then, as if just having an idea, De Poitiers added.

“Right, I want you to go to investigate it. Can you do that?”

* * *

Louise came out of the red-brick command center as if being driven out. Saito and Rene, who were waiting at the entrance of the building, ran up to her.

“How was it?”

Fuun, Louise looking the other way walked directly past them.

Saito snorted. He hardly talked to Louise since yesterday. After leaving Louise in front of the tent of the dragon knight battalion, the couple had been in a very ugly mood.

Saito walked behind Louise’s back.

“Haah, princess and her servant.” Rene said sarcastically.

Then he lowered his voice and whispered into Saito's ear.

“Just between us... Are you Academy’s researchers?”

“Academy?” Saito looked at Rene in utter amazement. Interested dragon knights gathered around the boy.

“I guess the flight machine was made by Academy.”

“Are there any new magical weapons?”

“Like in the recent mission, where one was used in Dartanes to confuse enemies?”

The boy knights’ eyes were sparkling brilliantly while talking to Saito. Apparently, they thought that Louise and Saito were researchers of the magic laboratory. Indeed, the only ones that knew about Louise's Void were only a few generals.

Though it is easy to convince masses outside the court that it all was a war miracle, the same excuse doesn’t really work with nobles. So the most plausible explanation would be ‘Academy’s new magical weapons’.

Louise, listening to Saito’s conversation attentively, halted.

Pon!* Saito stopped as well. Everyone stood upright. A tensed atmosphere emanating from Louise, sank into all of them. What else could one expect from the duke’s third daughter?

Louise, not turning around, said in a clear voice.

“Not exactly. I do not belong to Academy researchers. I am Her Majesty's court lady, under her direct control.”

Saito panicked. Hey! Baka Louise! Void should be kept a secret! It might be a big trouble, if the rumors would reach the enemy! They would be targeted! He thought in feverish haste.

“We are the members of ‘Zero organization’ responsible for researching new weapons, under direct royal family command.”

Huh? Saito was speechless. What Zero Organization? Never heard of it.

“I-is that so?! Great!”

“Though I do not really understand, it sounds like a really powerful organization!”

“Really? Secret Organization? Then you can’t tell anyone? Then you research magical weapons, but what does it differ from the academy’s researches? There must be a death punishment for revealing it.

“R-really?”

“Everyone, swear by the founder to not disclose it!”

They all, being kind, swore sincerely.

We could pretend to be members of zero organization researching new magical weapons. This way enemies or allies would not be able to even imagine about ‘Void’ existence.

Saito thought then. If someone would start denying the rumors it would cause even more rumors.

But one could to make a plausible ‘true’ rumor, to avert curious eyes from the truth.

It was the right thing to do in order to manipulate the information.

He ran up to Louise and whispered.

“...but have you told me about such plan. Not much.”

“...I only said following the order of the princess. Even the allies should not know about the void, thus I said an excuse.”

“You! You are not paying attention to my words. You are not listening to what I say at all!”

“It would be useless, as you cannot act, idiot.”

With a snort, Louise turned her face away and started walking.

“What’s wrong between you and your mistress, you are moody lately.”

Rene muttered.

Saito answered casually.

“Fuh. You are imagining things.” Hearing his words, Louise turned around.

“You were acting uneasy ever since we returned from giving that report, you were acting dejected and angry. That’s unusual.”

“I am not angry” Saito repeated.

Louise gave a cold stare to Saito.

“Wha-what...”

With a snort, Louise turned around and started to walk in silence. Saito, remembering his decision to ignore her, turned his face away as well.

* * *

However, the destination that Louise headed to was not Saito’s tent.

“Hey, where is she going?”

She passed the port where two iron towers were lined up... passed the arsenal blast-furnace... and the training grounds on the great plaza.

“Not to our corps.”

Rene said. Indeed, there was the tent of the dragon knight battalion headquarters, which they visited yesterday. For some reason she passed all the other tents and walked alone, looking around as if searching for someone.

Around there were 20 wind dragons tied to the stake, roaring and barking. It was dangerous going there so far away from other units.

There was only one person taking care of them.

It was the beautiful and tall Shinto priest of Romalia... Julio.

As if spoiling a lover, Julio patted wind dragons scurf of the neck. He was talking about something with the dragon. Seeing Louise heading straight to Julio made Saito’s mood drop more.

He ran after Louise. Rene followed Saito.

“Mister Cesar.”

When Louise called, a smile appeared on Julio's face. He approached Louise in a hoity-toity manner, took her hand and kissed it.

"Please inform me with an owl or pigeon next time. I would have escorted you."

"No, I have a business concerning you and your wind dragon." Louise said.

"Me and my wind dragon?"

"If you are free now, I would like to fly with you."

Julio, without asking why, bowed with a smile plastered all over his face.

"Not everyday one gets the chance to help such beautiful people! There cannot be questions about it! Really, this is an unexpected pleasure!"

"What are you doing?! Stop playing around!"

Saito muttered in an unpleasant tone

"That's what Romalians are." Rene frowned.

"In any case, where should I fly you to?"

When Julio said that, Saito instantly forgot his oath to ignore and grabbed Louise's shoulder.

"Hey, Louise."

"What? You are in the way. Move it."

Saito, after taking a few deep deep breaths, said.

"If you want to fly, why are you not using my zero fighter? Why this foppish... No, why did you ask the Shinto priest -sama of Romalia."

Snort* "Because you are unpleasant." Louise said clearly.

"Huh?"

"He is well-mannered, gentle and smart. Moreover he doesn't have strange thoughts. T-t-those strange thoughts. Anyone would be better."

"But that does not matter when flying!"

"I will tell you clearly. When riding behind anyone, it is better to ride behind a good-looking boy."

The moment Louise said so, Saito's body hardened.

"...W-w-wha-what?"

While dripping in cold sweat, only by thinking, Saito said - Louise pointed her finger at Saito.

"What? Jealous? Are you stupid? Whom are you comparing yourself against? Isn't this handsome, well-dressed Shinto priest of Romalia, three, four, five, six times better than a dog-mole, yet it compares itself against him and is jealous? Isn't it funny? Are you stuuupid? Why don't you drop dead?"

"Y-you..."

Saito as if suffocating, closed and opened his mouth few times. The flame of the jealousy blazed up violently, almost burning up his body.

"Better luck next time. Since I and this handsome Shinto Priest are going for a secret duty, you can clean the tent meanwhile. Since you made it dirty, make sure to make it sparkingly clean. And do the laundry."



Louise stuck her tongue out at Saito.

Julio, who climbed on the dragon, called out to Louise.

“Ready to go, Miss Valliere.”

“Hold it! I’m coming!” Louise jumped onto the wind dragon

“Please hold me tightly. You are a jewel of Tristain. There would be a great diplomatic problem if you were to fall!”

“You flirt!”

Louise, giving Saito a wide grin, wrapped her arms around Julio's waist. And, smugly fixed her hair. The wind dragon flapped his wings powerfully. Sand and dust flew off the ground, making Saito and others instinctively shut their eyes.

When they opened them, the wind dragon was already high in the sky, flying vividly. Feeling like a fool, Saito watched the wind dragon disappear.

“What’s with her! What was that! What an attitude!”

Saito pulled out Derflinger from his shoulder and brandished with it in anger. Rene and others jumped away from Saito panicking, watching him with blank surprise.

”Hey. Nooo, partner, I am also having a tough tiiime”

“What was that!”

“Everyone, save me from this guyyy...”

“Take this and that! What malicious words!”

“Snap out of iiiiit.... Listen to me, partner. Ah, well, don’t pay attention. ”

* * *

Extending over the wind dragon, Louise looked down at the ground. The people at the tent were becoming small fast. Noticing the look of blank surprise all over Saito’s face, put an oversize grin on Louise’s face again. Look! Such stupid expression on his face! Whaat? Feeling jealous?

“Bleeh!” Louise stuck her tongue out towards the ground again.

“Now then, where should I fly to?”

A voice coming from the front, brought Louise back.

“W-well...” she hesitated whether to say it or not.

“Where should we scout?” Julio repeated.

“F-from where do you know that it is a scouting mission?”

“Even a child could guess that! It can’t be anything but duty! But, one thing I cannot understand!

“What?”

“A VIP researcher of the academy like you doing a scout duty! Unimaginable! Don’t familiars usually work as scouts.”

Louise with her left hand tightly grabbed the Founders prayer book. In order not to loose it, she made a bag reaching down her waist, with a leather string over her.

“That’s the test from upper department. To see...how good our researched magical weapons are. Surely all tests will be passed.”

“To check the good and bad sides.”

Louise nodded.

Louise started thinking about her legendary power – she learned that it was nothing more than just a gear in the giant country and army mechanisms. How much can you use it? What for can you use it? Can you use it for your own needs? The great generals also looked at me with those kind of eyes.

Though it is natural, there is no point to lie to myself. I am not Louise Françoise, I am a user of void.

But that might be one and the same. I’m just fooling myself up with family members and classmates, because I am just a user of Void...

While she was lost in such musings, a laughter echoed.

“W-what?”

“Ah, sorry! City of South Gotha!”

“Ancient Town. I heard it is beautiful. We cannot let it be destroyed by a war.”

This made Louise speechless and Julio turned around.

“Well, I understand - there is war now. However, I am a Shinto priest.” he laughed while saying.

He gave her a charming smile. This made Louise’s cheeks blaze on their own.

“I, I see”

Julio, still turned around, brought his face close to Louise’s.

“You are truly beautiful, Miss Valliere.”

Slightly pulling away, confused Louise asked “B-but why is Romalia helping? They are not our allies...”

“On our own will! Small help! Today’s Albion may effect all countries in Halkeginia. The monarchy would be overthrown, what would happen with the nobility in republic? If that would happen it would be a serious threat! Republic is all countries nightmare. No exception is Romalia, governed by pope-sama.

“I do not understand the politics well.”

“I am the same. I also do not have much interest in it. I am much more interested talking about other things...”

“Like?”

“How can you be so beautiful, just like a fairy?”

He asked with a serious look, Louise looked down slightly.

“Don’t say silly things, look more carefully. You are badly mistaken.”

“Excuses. According to Azuro’s we are on the right way. We are flying to the City of South Gotha right?”

Louise became suspicious. This Shinto priest is not a mage. In other words his abilities are those of a commoner. And even for a mage it would take some time to establish a connection between him and his familiar...

So how can a Shinto priest, who is not even a mage, communicate so well with a beast that is not a familiar? How is this possible?

Julio laughed at vacant Louise’s look.

“The same way that you can use academy’s magic weapons, I can use god's miracle.”

“Stop joking.”

God's miracle? It must be some kind of joke. God is a metaphysical being. Such source of power in a world where magic rules the reason of the world is impossible.

“What! Yes, it's a joke! However, I know about animals more than others! Naa, Azuro!”

The wind dragon barked and started increasing his speed.

Two people were flying through the sky of City of South Gotha for one hour.

The town was encircled by walls, with colorful brick houses behind them. Town’s population was close to 40000 people.

“Fly lower.”

Julio nodded and started to fly lower. They could see town people wave. Probably they mistook them for allies. Then Julio smiled and muttered something to wind dragon. Azuro spread his wings and started to shake in a strange way.

“What are you doing?”

“Mimicking Albion wind dragon’s movement. With this ‘dance’ Albion’s wind dragon looks for the companion. Albion dragon knights use it to identify foe or friend.”

“Your Azuro is from Albion?”

“Are you kidding? I trained him myself!”

“You are great.”

Louise felt admiration. It is not easy even to an average mage to train a dragon.

“It is good to study enemy movements beforehand.”

When Louise nodded and looked at the town scenery below. She could give a report while using ‘illusion’ spell, providing vivid images seen from above. After seeing this, she could restore images from her memory with the illusion spell.

The instructions to use ‘illusion’ came from the staff section. Louise "void" can be applied in military planning. It was the moment when she finally realized that she was just a tool.

In the town’s plaza, they noticed a big monster striding.

“An orc”

“Yeah. Is it my imagination... or are there a lot of soldiers missing?”

Not just imagination. There were just orcs, trolls and demi-humans armed with spear and club. Though they could see a mage commanding them... there were no soldiers in sight.

“Using demi-humans for army replacement is a cheap stuff. However... those brutal orc demons are following the humans as well...”

“There must be some kind of trick. However I do not know how that mage can make them obey.”

Louise concentrated her spirit and began imprinting the spectacle to her mind.

When you use the void element for big one-time spells, collecting willpower takes some time. And since it was already used today ... the big illusion spell covering wide landscape could not be created now.

“Circle over the town once more.”

“It might be dangerous. This cover will not last forever.”

Julio muttered - he was dancing an Albion wind dragon dance for five minutes.

"Facts and figures are needed. The amount of will for the spell is insufficient, so I can do nothing but write on paper."

Louise, ignoring the danger, information about the town was written down on the parchment, while shuttling many times over the town. With those notes 'illusion' was used in order to take as many facts and figures home as possible. While seeing such Louise, Julio smiled.

"There was no point for jealousy, right?"

"Eh? Eeh? What are you talking about!"

"Without weapons it is dangerous and you were worried. Not for yourself ...but for that familiar – kun. Danger cannot be helped. Because of duty. However, I cannot be brave in the rash danger. Do you differ? Why oh why, you are leaving this calm part out in anger. I wonder if it is because you are a girl?"

"I don't understand what you mean."

Louise said with a furious blush on her cheeks.

"That flying machine is out of bullets, right. There was no use of secret weapons. Other than fast flights it is useless."

"...How do you know this?"

"I was on Varsenda's board. Being curious, I examined that flight machine attached to the deck . Extremely well done! Amazing!"

"Curiosity killed the cat."

Julio laughed from those Louise's threatening words.

"Please be relieved! I am your ally! I wasn't thinking of any ploy to use you, unlike your generals... Now then, our time ran out."

"Not yet. Wait a little."

"It is impossible."

"It is an order!"

"It is an enemy."

Julio pointed with his chin. Nine wind dragons were flying directly at them.

Louise was stupefied.

"Escape!"

"...nnh, impossible. I've become too addicted to the chat!"

Smiling, Julio muttered. The enemy is faster in the sky. It is not possible to get away even when flying at one's best.

Staring at the closing down wind dragons Louise trembled. Gathering information for the generals, may have been overdone. She bit her lips, thinking about death possibility in terror.

She shook her head, trying to shake off such fears.... Somehow... she needed to counterattack with void. But how many explosions can be shot? Willpower... is low. The scale is small. Would they hit well enough?

While she was thinking that, the instructions came from Julio.

"Louise, are you good at horse riding?"

Though she was suddenly called by her first name, it wasn't the right time to complain about it. She

nodded with a suspicious expression on her face.

“Y-yeah...I am.”

“Hold on tight then! As if you would be jumping over fences with a stud! Azuro!”

The wind dragon let out a small bark and sped up aiming towards the enemy.

“Hey! Hey! Don’t go there! You can’t use magic!”

Julio thrust straight into the enemy's dragon knight formation. Louise screamed.

“Hey! Ah! Magic spell! Nooooo!”

All nine dragon knights shot spells one after another. Shining blades and fireballs flew towards them. When she started to recite magic too, Julio shouted at her.

“Don’t let go!”

When the magic was about to hit... the wind dragon suddenly pulled an unexpected movement. It twisted it’s body and suddenly shot up in the air, avoiding spells one after another.

Unbelievable. A wind dragon was moving at a speed that was unimaginable for such body. It was moving like a small bird, surprising even the enemies. For a moment, their speed decreased.

“Breath! Azuro!”

A big fire breath escaped the wind dragons mouth. It hit the dragon knight in the front making him crash down.

Then, passing through the other, it used its nails to tear up another dragons wings. Another one headed down.

Dumbfounded, Louise stared at such spectacle.

How can a wind dragon release such big breath! Unbelievable!

Remaining enemy dragon knights whose number decreased to seven, turned around and headed back at them.

As one would expect from Albion’s Dragon knights.

Though they were surprised by unexpected Julio’s wind dragons movements for a moment, they regained their composure now. Dividing into two lines they flinching moved forwards.

They started spreading and closing a circle around them.

Seems like they closed their retreating paths carefully, planning to kill them.

In the movement that could be called casual, Julio's Azuro entered the circle. The enemy in front, tried to run, keeping a considerable distance.

But once Azuro turned a head towards that enemy, another one flew from the back. Seems, like the one in front was just a decoy.

“Behind you! Behind you!”

Though Louise screamed, Julio, with a smile on his lips, kept on running after the decoy.

The enemy from behind, thinking that Julio's attention was surely focused on the decoy, started to closing in steadily.

At the same time when enemy from behind released the spell, Azuro twisted around. Following enemy’s movement’s from behind, dodging the attack with a wild somersault, Azuro spewed another breath.

Wrapped up in the breath, the attacking dragon knight fell down.

Shocked, Louise stared at the sudden development of things.

The movements of the dragon were unbelievably vivid, without making any unnecessary movements.

“H-how can you make a dragon move like that!”

“Don’t talk, or you’ll bite your tongue.”

Julio’s tone of voice remained perfectly composed.

With three of them gone, the atmosphere around the enemy changed. Louise ducked her head, felling the bursting anger. Encirclement loosened for a moment, and then, all dragon knights at once, plunged at them.

For a moment, Louise rocked up and down, side to side. Her body felt like a ball in the hands of juggler. Forgetting to keep her eyes open she closed them... Louis was clinging to Julio.

Every time Azuro turned, he was doing a severe damage with his fangs and claws to the opponent’s wind dragons. To avoid enemy’s attacks, he attacked himself.

In only four seconds, six of them were beaten and fell down.

“The end. Let’s return then.

Julio said in a nonchalant voice.

“Wh-what happened?”

The wind dragon together with rider, were a single movement.

No, it was beyond any explanations, the movements of unbelievable Azuro,

“I just brought out a true ability of the dragon. Everyone else’s dragons were making too many useless movements. That’s all.”

Julio said casually. And Louise understood... why him, not being a mage, became the commander of the third unit.

Chapter 4 – The Secretary and the Emperor

At the capital city of Albion, Londonium, there was a heated discussion going on over the sortie at the White Hall.

Because the Albion army was attracted to Datarnes by Louise's "Illusion", they let the chance to defeat the enemy army at the coast escape. If they had properly assaulted the enemy as they landed in Rosais, it would have been possible to chase the enemy from Albion to Halkeginia.....

"Now that the enemy has finished disembarking and set up camp, it would be suicidal to attempt a counterattack from this side."

At a round table where around fifteen people sit, a young general sitting on the north side said in exhaustion. It is just like he said. Half of the Albion air fleet, that still had forty vessels, were sunk in the fleet battle the other day and the remaining ships received heavy damage. They can't even sortie out ten ships.

On the other hand, for the Tristain • Germania fleet, twelve vessels were sunk and eight received heavy damage, but there are still forty able to fight. They have complete air superiority in this situation.

On top of that, the number of people in the Albion army were decreasing. At the battle of Tarbes, they lost a whole three-thousand, and the loss the other day caused the morale of the entire army to drop and some groups end up estranging. The vigor shown during the revolution was no longer there.

Against the sixty-thousand who own air superiority, there's no way they could continue attacking. Stares of blame were focused on Cromwell, the Holy Albion Republic Diet chairman and first Albion emperor, who was sitting in the middle.

Because after failing many strategies, he had let the enemy land.

However, Cromwell shook off the stares..... and remained nonchalant.

General Hawkins, who was substantially taking command of Albion's main force, opened his mouth.

"The inversion is my miss. I let opportunity to annihilate the enemy in one move escape. There are no words of apologies."

"Our army is in rags." Cromwell smiled.

"And the operation to take the children at the academy hostage failed too."

Even though he failed, it doesn't seem he was troubled over it.

Hawkins said in a sigh. It was a tired voice.

"The magic weapons the enemy uses was above what we imagined."

"Miss Sheffield"

The black-covered secretary behind Cromwell, Sheffield, nodded and read the report written on the parchment.

"The "illusion" that appeared near Datarnes stayed for thirteen hours and suddenly disappeared afterwards."

"It is just a makeshift magic that creates illusions. What is there to fear?"

"It had enormous effect."

Closing his eyes, Hawkins said that. Perplex through illusions and cause the army to be brought

back..... In other words, it was creating an effect that doesn't change from a military force of tens of thousands. He couldn't make light of this as just an illusion.

"To be honest, I am afraid of the enemy. Besides the illusion of Datarnes, the enemy uses many unknown magic. That magic light which destroyed our fleet....."

Cromwell faces Sheffield and nodded.

Sheffield once again read the parchment in a well resounding voice, like a choir singing a hymn in a temple.

"It is concluded... that the enemy is not in the condition to attack with the light that annihilated our fleet at Tarbes."

"Why is that?"

"If they were to use it, they would have used it in the fleet battle before landing the other day."

"The possibility they were reserving?"

"The enemy army would have been in a devastating situation if they lost that fleet battle. If they were to use everything they could, then, most certainly, they would have released that "miraculous light". But the enemy fought normally. Though our army lost regardless."

"It is fine if we win on land." Cromwell took over for her.

Hearing this, the general staff headquarter's general stood up.

"Your Excellency, general staff headquarters assumes that the enemy is headed to capture City of South Gotha. This is....." Tapping the tip of his staff on the map on the table, he explained.

"It is the meeting point of the main road and an important metropolis. As a factor that supports the assumption, the enemy's reconnaissance has become active around here. A few days ago, dragon knights, thought to be for reconnaissance purposes, came flying and fought with our army's dragon knight squad. We should position our main forces in City of South Gotha and wait for the enemy."

The other generals raised voices of approval. It was a plausible strategy.

However, Cromwell shook his head.

"The main forces will not move from Londonium."

"Do you plan to sit and wait for defeat?"

Hawkins looked at Cromwell in the way as if rebuking a child who refused to let his toys get taken away. Cromwell shook his head once again.

"General, I do not mind if the city of South Gotha is taken."

"You say to give the enemy a strategic base from under your nose. The enemy will probably replenish their low supplies at the metropolis and rest."

"We will not give them supplies."

"How?"

"Take all of the food away from the residents."

Hawkins was at a loss for words. What a..... Cromwell was trying to use the residents of South Gotha.

"The enemy will end up having to give their little amount of food to the residents. It'll work well on stopping them. This plan is wiser than rashly proceeding through a defensive battle and suffering losses."

"What will we do if the enemy abandons them! Many people will die from starvation!"

"That will not happen. What, even if the enemy abandons them, it is just one city. Between the importance of a country, it is a trivial sacrifice."

Those were cold words, unthinkable of an ex-prelate. However, what he said was right.

The allied forces did not invade to negotiate with Cromwell. They came to abolish Cromwell and dominate this land. Eight to nine chances out of ten, they will think about the civilians after the war and perform charity.

Still..... What will we do if we will? At the worst, a whole metropolis could revolt. That is how fearful the resentment from food is.

"You plan to make a whole metropolis your enemy..... Either way, there will be unpleasant aftereffects..."

"Why do you think I arranged for those sub-humans to be sent ahead? All we have to do is say it was their own decision."

It was unknown how, but Cromwell excelled in negotiation with sub-humans. Knowing that the sub-humans were sent ahead not for a normal army operation but this kind of strategy, the generals were dumbfounded.

Their leader broke a treaty, not only used makeshift means to commence strategies, but finally plans to betray his own country's civilians through cowardly measures.

"I will also place a trap in the water of South Gotha."

"Do you plan to throw poison in the water? Something like poison will be quickly washed away."

"Not poison. 'Void'."

"A trap of 'Void'?"

"That's right. It will become interesting. However, it will take time for the effects to work." Cromwell smiled.

And standing up..... He raised his fist.

"Gentlemen, it's the Pentecost! Stop the enemy until then! When the Pentecost ends..... 'Void' and the crossing of two staffs will drop the iron hammer upon our haughty enemies!"

The crossing of two staffs is the crest of the Gallia royal family.

"OHH! Finally, Gallia!" As the conference room became excited.

"At that time, our army will advance! To demolish our haughty enemies! I promise you!"

Sensing the atmosphere on the grounds heating up, Cromwell walked briskly to the balcony.

The generals and cabinet ministers stood up and followed him.

"Let all of our cabinet ministers encourage our brave and loyal soldiers!"

Voices of jubilation surrounded Cromwell and the others.

In the vast courtyard once built to wait on the king's audience, crazily enthusiastic trust was being offered to Cromwell, and the monarch's guards were lining in rows.

Thousands of voices of jubilation reach him. Cromwell waved his hand to answer.

"The enemy has landed on fatherland! Everyone! I question you brave revolutionary soldiers! Is this defeat?"

"No! No! No! No! No! No! No! No! No! No! No! No! No!"

A ring of jubilation surrounded Cromwell.

"Exactly! This is not defeat! Absolutely not! I promise you victory! To you all, peerless, loyal, and

brave, who stole the crown from that incompetent king, I promise you victory! The haughty enemies will be destroyed when the Pentecost ends! They have touched God's wrath! Listen! Listen! The ones to leading the lost Halkeginia are the civilians of Albion, who are chosen by God! For that reason, the founder has entrusted power to me!"

There were numerous soldiers who died in battle lined up on the balcony.

Cromwell raised his ring up high.

Doing so..... the dead soldiers revived and walked off.

"Everyone! As long as we have this "Void", we have no defeat! Believe in me! Believe in our fatherland! Believe in "Void", the power of us who were chosen by the founder!"

"Void! Void! Void! Void! Void! Void! Void! Void! Void! Void! "

"That's right, Void!" Cromwell swung his fist.

"The founder is with us! Do not fear! The founder is with us!"

The enthusiasm in the courtyard reached a climax. Cromwell shouted in a loud voice.

"Revolution, Banzai! Destroy the enemy!"

The enthusiasm even reached the balcony.

"Revolution, Banzai! Destroy the enemy! Revolution, Banzai! Destroy the enemy! Revolution, Banzai! Destroy the enemy!"

"Holy Albion republic, Banzai!"

"Holy Albion republic, Banzai! Holy Albion republic, Banzai! Holy Albion republic, Banzai! Holy Albion republic, Banzai!"

"Holy emperor, our highness, Banzai!" One of the cabinet ministers stood up and shouted in a loud voice.

"Holy emperor, our highness, Banzai! Holy emperor, our highness, Banzai! Holy emperor, our highness, Banzai! Holy emperor, our highness, Banzai! Holy emperor, our highness, Banzai!"

The endless shouting was sucked into the air.

After the wildly enthusiastic audience...

Cromwell was sitting, troubled, in a gigantic private room that was once the king's bedroom. His body was shaking slightly.

Sheffield was standing in front of him, and whispered to him while looking down at him.

"That was a brilliant speech, Prelate."

The man, who was called prelate at his previous position, as if falling off the chair, kneeled down at Sheffield's feet.

The mask of dignity he had shown earlier has been blown off.

Just a man in his thirties that was panicking in fear, just a thin man who was nothing but a prelate was there.

"Ohhhhhhh! Miss! Miss Sheffield! That person! Will that person really send soldiers to this abominable country? This is not the words of that general just not..... I! I am scared! I, a thin man who can't even control magic, am afraid!"

To that Cromwell, Sheffield spoke in a voice as if to comfort a child.

"What are you saying. To be afraid now! The one who said 'I want to be king' at that bar was you. Because I was impressed by those candor words, I decided to give you, as my master, Albion."

"Perhaps a mere prelate has dreamed too much..... Tempted by you and "that person", I obtained the Andvari's Ring, collected nobles that held contempt towards the royal family, and began my revenge towards the Albion royal family who embarrassed me... To that point, it was fun, oh it was fun, it was like I was dreaming."

"It's that sufficient."

"Ohh, just this continent above the sky is too much for an accessory like me..... Why was it necessary to invade Tristain and Germania?"

"How many times does it take for you to understand. There is the necessity to collect Halkeginia into one. To recover the holy land is the only way to follow the founder and God's will."

"To me, that is a part of a clergyman. Though there is no mistake that recovering the holy land is a dream....."

"Then continue to dream."

"The responsibility is too heavy! The enemy has invaded! Enemy in my country! The enemy has come to hang me like those incompetent kings! What should I do! Tell me this isn't a nightmare. Miss....." Smiling, Sheffield squatted down in front of Cromwell and looked into his tear-soaked face. Cromwell raised his face. Lifting up his chin, Sheffield..... "Stop acting spoiled." whispered quietly.

"Hii!"

The polite and warm demeanor just now had disappeared, and Sheffield had made a complete change into a Raptorese-like face.

Her brunette hair, like deep darkness, fluttered and the eyes below it were releasing a bewitching radiance. Taken in by those eyes, Cromwell began to tremble.

"You dream a sweet molasses-like dream that a normal priest couldn't see even if he reincarnated a hundred times and now you say you don't want to see a nightmare? 'My country'? Your land doesn't even stretch fifty centimeters on this uselessly destitute Albion."

"I'm! I'm very sorry!"

Cromwell slid his face on the floor beside Sheffield's feet . Sticking out his tongue, he licked Sheffield's shoes.

"Forgive me..... Fo, forgive me..... Ha, hagi..... Forgive me....."

"The Andvari's Ring"

Timidly, Cromwell handed the ring he was wearing to Sheffield.

Treasure of the water spirit, the magic ring that can grant the dead fake life.....

Cromwell remembered the day where he went with Sheffield and Gallia's magic knights to Ragdorian Lake to steal this ring from the water spirit.

What caused the start of everything was him talking at a bar. He was heading towards Gallia's capital, Ryutis, because he was delivering something.....

Cromwell was treating a beggar to a bottle of sake.

"Prelate, as thanks for the sake, I will grant you one thing you wish. Tell me."

Being told that by the beggar, Cromwell said as a joke.

"Let's see, I want to be king."

"King, is it."

The beggar, with his face covered in a deep rope, smiled and said.

"Yes." Cromwell nodded.

Of course, he meant it to be a joke. Playing around after sake. He wasn't serious about it. However, the next morning..... This Sheffield came to the lodge he was staying in. She said.

"I will make you king. Follow me."

At that moment, his life as a local prelate delineated to a different path. At a violent momentum.....

Sheffield was patting the Andvari's Ring dearly.

The stone on the ring was, enchantingly, glowing deep light blue.

"What do you think is the power stored in this ring?"

Cromwell shook his head. He knew that it could revive corpses. That is the truth. There is no way he could know about the mechanisms of "Void".

"Unable to control magic, I do not know. You are the one who told me to call this power 'Void', right?"

"Do you know about the 'wind stone'?"

Cromwell nodded. It is the material used to allow flying ships to float. A magic stone said to be the condensed power of "wind". There are countless numbers of mines for digging out wind stones in Albion.

"This is a similar substance."

"Then it isn't 'Void'?"

"Correct, this is not 'Void'. 'Wind stones' and this 'Andvari's Ring' are just drops of the source of the powers that rule this world. This is the material that becomes the source of magic called predecessor magic. There are all kinds of names it is called by though. Sage's Stone, Orb of Life..... Historically, it would be called 'Void's' enemy....."

"I am constantly impressed by the profoundness of your knowledge."

"That is why every time it is used, its magic is whittled and it gets smaller. See."

Cromwell nodded.

"The point is, this is a crystallization of the predecessor's magic of 'water'. The condensed magic hidden in this is incomparable to the wind stones common around here..... A rare stone. Which is the reason this is the protected treasure of the water spirit..... Andvari's ring. In other words, the predecessor's treasure....."

Sheffield stared at the ring.

Doing so..... Her forehead started to shine.

The light was flowing from inside.

When Cromwell first saw this light, he was surprised. When Sheffield touches this Andvari's ring, her forehead shines.

Are there times when people's forehead shines?

Even if he asks Sheffield, she does not answer. This mysterious female will not teach him anything that matters, anything essential. She only hands down orders.

With the stone, Sheffield lightly combed Cromwell's cheek.

"Ho, hohhhhhh....."

Cromwell twitched and shivered. The Andvari's ring was vibrating slightly. Just touching it made him feel like an electric current was running through him.

When it touched Sheffield's hand, the Andvari's ring awoken..... it was that kind of vibration.

"Do you know? The trait of the power of water."

"He, healing wounds....."

"That is on the surface. The power of 'water' rules over the body's constitution. The heart too."

".....Ha, hah"

"Moving corpses is only one of the powers this ring holds."



Chapter 5 – The Ancient City of South Gotha

Roughly a mile out from the battlements of Fort South Gotha, at the staging area for the assault, the three hundred and fifty troops of the De Vinuiyu Battalion were awaiting for the horn to signal the beginning of the attack.

Today, fifteen days after the landing, the Allied Army was finally launching their offence.

Leading the Second Company, Guiche was shivering from head to toe, staring intently at the mist-covered city of South Gotha.

“Company commander, sir!”

The sergeant on guard at his side, Nicola, spoke in a soft tone.

“W-w-w-what is it?” Guiche stammered.

“You dropped your wand.”

Guiche immediately looked below at his feet and saw his rose-shaped wand lying on the ground.

He frantically picked it back up and shoved it into his chest pocket, while trying to maintain the solemn expression on his face.

“Company commander, sir!”

“W-what is it?”

“Although it might not be my concern, I still think it would be better for you to go take a leak first.”

Guiche immediately glared at him and exclaimed:

“I’ve already gone!”

“That’s good, then.” Nicola replied while grinning.

“There’s nothing to be nervous about. According to the reports in the past few days, the enemy’s cannons have all been destroyed by our fleet’s bombardment, and they’ve only deployed demi-humans to guard the streets”

“Those d-demi-humans are incredibly ferocious, and their bodies are massive.”

“But they are foes that are incredibly easy to lure into traps.” Nicola remarked while watching ahead.

Guiche observed the small man carrying his musket. This was the first real battle he had participated in, and there was no one else he could rely on. With such thoughts in his mind, the man in front of him appeared to be larger than any lunkhead he knew.

“However... from where could we start our assault? The whole city is surrounded by those huge rock walls...”

Hearing Guiche’s concern, Nicola nodded his head.

“Someone’s going to come to ‘open a route’ for us soon.”

After some time idly passing by, a fleet of battleships appeared in the skies above. The ten

battleships, by then all neatly lined up in a row, proceeded to begin bombarding the wall with cannon fire. In the face of the floating battleships' firepower, the enemy was completely powerless.

"Boom—! Boom—! Boom—!" Accompanied by the thunderous roar of cannon fire and thick clouds of smoke, the walls began to crumble and cheers could be heard erupting from the soldiers assembled at the staging area. Under the barrage of cannon fire, the walls along the battlements collapsed.

And then, appearing right in front of their eyes, was a group of huge mud golems.

"They must be golems made by Triangle Class magicians." Guiche thought to himself.

Since he himself was a Dot Grade magician, he could never create such large golems. He looked up at it in admiration – Although it was slightly smaller than the mud golems created by Fouquet of the Crumbling Dirt, whom had once rattled the whole of Tristain, they were still huge. The mud golems, with a height of roughly twenty meters, solidly stumbled along, gradually drawing closer to the collapsed walls.

On the backs of the mud golems were flags bearing the family emblems of their respective creators, and Guiche, upon noticing a familiar emblem amongst them, instinctively yelled out loud:

"T-that's brother's mud golem!"

It must belong to his brother, since the flag fluttering on its back bore the emblem of the Gramont family, 'A Rose and Panther'.

At that instant, with a whoosh, a large object of some sort flew straight towards the mud golems approaching the wall. Wham! One of the mud golems had its abdomen shot through into a gaping hole. The golem immediately lost its balance, and collapsed into a heap onto the ground. The metallic lights shot towards the approaching golems one after another, felling many of them as they were struck by its fire.

"What in the world was that?" Guiche gasped.

"It's a giant ballista." Nicola replied immediately. "I'm afraid they're probably operated by the orcs. It's a three meter-long weapon based on the crossbow, capable of shooting giant bolts. If a human were to be struck by it, they would surely be smashed into pieces. But then again, they're not designed to be used against people."

Guiche worriedly watched his brother's golem. A bolt was sticking out of the golem's leg, but fortunately, the mud golem still remained standing.

"Is company commander...a member of the Gramont family?" Nicola asked, noticing Guiche's excitement.

"I'm the youngest son."

Hearing Guiche's reply, Nicola's eyes opened wide in astonishment.

"That means you are the Marshal's...! What a surprise! What brought you to a lowly gun battalion like ours? With your father's name, whether it be the knights, or an elite regimental headquarters, wouldn't you be able to join any battalion you desire?"

"If I were to use my father's name, does it not mean that it is no longer because of my merit?" Guiche replied as he looked to the front.

Nicola was unable to say anything, but after a while, he grinned and slapped Guiche's shoulder.

"I like your kind of attitude, young master. Since that's how it is, we ain't returning back home until we win our merit and glory!"

Soon after, a troop of dragon knights arrived as well. Heading straight towards the ballistae upon the battlements, and with a combination of magic and dragon fire, they quickly silenced the

ballistae.

Finally arriving at the foot of the collapsed wall, which had been turned into rubble by the cannon fire earlier, the mud golems began clearing away the rubble.

“They're making an entrance.”

His men would soon breach into the city through that entry. Guiche's entire body began to tremble uncontrollably.

“You're shaking?”

“...E-even though I would really like to say it's due to the excitement...it's most probably because of fear. Ugh...”

“Heh, being honest is a good thing, you will never succeed on reckless courage alone. But, you can't be too cowardly either. Regardless, just let me take care of it.”

Nicola raised his hands towards the roughly hundred musketeers behind him. Another fifty or so pikemen acted as their guard. This company numbering roughly hundred and fifty men, were the soldiers under Guiche.

“Prime and load your cartridge—!”

The musketeers then leisurely loaded their barrels with the bullet and gunpowder.

“Company commander sir, might I trouble you to light this?” Nicola pulled a length of slow match towards Guiche.

Guiche nodded, and cast an ‘Ignite’ spell on the cord. Accompanying the sizzling noise of the slow match smouldering, a burning smell hung in the air. Nicola called a soldier over, and handed the ignited cord over to be distributed amongst the other soldiers.

“This is a slow match given by our company commander! Make sure that it is not extinguished!”

The response that returned lacked any sense of enthusiasm.

Rumble—! The golems cleared away the wall. At that moment, Nicola poked Guiche in the waist and said:

“Company commander sir, let's go.”

Raising his wand whilst still trembling, Guiche yelled out:

“G-g-gramont Company, forward!”

The veteran musketeers followed behind with staggering footsteps. It was only then that Guiche realised – it was only his own company that was charging forward! The order to charge hadn't been passed down from the top yet!

“Hey, sergeant—“ He was about to voice his complaint, but stopped upon noticing Nicola's calm and confident expression.

Once a company has begun advancing, it was almost impossible to halt their advance, and thus they could only continue moving forward.

A few seconds later, an order to “Charge!” resounded from the ranks behind.

Like a surging tidal wave, soldiers, knights and assorted others all stormed in their direction.

“We're all old veterans after all. If we don't start out a bit earlier, we won't be able to catch up.”

Probably due to the reason that they had set out earlier, Guiche's company was the first to reach one of the breaches along the battlements. But a couple of knights chased past them, storming into the city.

“But we were the first to get here!” Guiche shouted as he prepared to storm inside, right before Nicole grabbed him.

Immediately afterwards, the knights which had just charged in were sent flying back out together with their mounts, landing in front of Guiche in a miserable state. It seemed that on the other side of the wall were club-wielding orcs, waiting for simple-minded fools like them to deliver themselves to their doom.

Enormous monsters with a size at least five times that of a human, the group of orcs spotted Guiche's party and immediately stormed towards them. Guiche remembered the time when he had gone treasure-hunting with everyone; how they had been ambushed by orcs like these as well. His bronze golems had been pummelled into oblivion by them back then.

A sense of dread welled up within him.

“Fire! Fire! Quickly, fire!” Guiche began to yell frantically.

“Don’t fire just yet! Company commander sir! Use an incantation to knock over that guy furthest at the back! Quickly!”

Then, acting accordingly to what he had said, Guiche waved his artificial rose. Erupting from the ground below, a hand grabbed a hold of the leg of the orc at the back.

With a "Crash!" right in the middle of the narrow breach in the wall, the orc tripped over.

“First platoon! The leading group is your target! Fire!”

Without delay, Nicola issued the order to pour volley fire onto the orc at the head of the approaching group.

The thirty or so musketeers fired their guns in concert at the leading orc, shredding it to a honeycomb. The other orcs at the forefront were felled onto the ground as well, blocking the advance of the group behind them. Not the type to let such an opportunity go, Nicola bellowed his next order without hesitation.

“Second platoon! Fire—!”

Although the orcs were capable of waving their clubs about even after a barrage of bullets, they still couldn’t endure the impact of the dozens of bullets fired at such close quarters.

The orcs which were trailing behind decided to retreat, but within the narrow breach of the wall, the orc at the rear had been knocked to the ground by Guiche’s magic, unable to move. At the front, they were obstructed by the corpses of their allies. Just as they stumbled and trudged through the corpses to charge through, they were greeted with the volley fire of the remaining musketeers.

The last few remaining orcs were then met with the charge of the pikemen and quickly eliminated.

Staring at the twenty or so orc corpses on the ground, Guiche voiced out in admiration:

“S-so powerful...”

While he instructed the musketeers to reload their bullets, Nicolas revealed a grin.

“It's because these guys are very simple-minded- once they spot the enemy, they'll come charging straight at them.”

The veteran sergeant laughed as he patted Guiche’s shoulder.

“Company commander sir, look, now you can earn the highest merit.”

And just like that, the Ragtag Battalion demonstrated an extraordinary level of solidarity. Meanwhile on another front, was the solitary ‘Trump Card of the Allied Army’.

It was Louise and her familiar.

* * *

South Gotha was built upon a relatively high mountain. Encircled on all sides by a wall, a main road shaped like a five-pointed star was constructed within. Legends say that this was the first city built by the Founder on the continent of Albion; Whether this was the truth or not was impossible to know.

However, it was only the five roads of that pentagram that displayed that elegant geometric design, within it was a complex of countless side streets and disorderly alleyways. It was no different than the other cities that could be seen all over Halkeginia.

At the moment, Louise was running frantically through a small alleyway. Saito could be seen by her side with Delflinger firmly in his grasp, followed closely by the various members of the dragon knights in disguise.

Chasing them from their rear were ten or so huge trolls and fang-bearing ogres; both were giants that measured roughly five meters tall.

Fortunately, this being a small alleyway, the beasts seemed to be struggling to squeeze through. Because they were crashing through protruding walls and windows alike as they chased through, it took them quite a while. If it had been a wide open plain instead, Louise and them would surely have been caught up to in an instant.

To find out why Louise was running back and forth through the maze of alleyways within South Gotha, we would have to begin from the mission that they had accepted.

In the simplest sense, their objective coincided with that of the assaulting main force: Infiltrate the city from the opposite side, with their original purpose to use 'Illusion' magic to create a phantom army, thus plunging the enemy into disarray...

"Why did you have to suddenly yell out like that?! Hey!" shouted Louise as she ran.

Three hours ago, they had snuck into the city under the cover of darkness.

"Didn't I already tell you? No matter what you see, don't act surprised! Hey!"

"B-but... It's too big! That troll thing! That ogre or something!"

The thing is, Louise's Void magic required an exceptionally long incantation period.

Just as she was chanting the incantation on a street corner whilst pretending to be preaching, an Albion noble responsible for patrolling went over to inquire:

"Who are you people supposed to be?"

"We are participants in the Founder's Rite of Passage, which has brought us to this ancient city of South Gotha. We wish for Albion to achieve victory, so we are currently praying to the heavens."

Although René had said so without blinking an eye, the patrolling magician, with a peculiar expression, still asked..

"Don't tell me... you're spies sent by Tristain and Germania?!"

Louise hastily shook her head rapidly.

René also shook his head.

Then Saito, noticing the huge troll standing behind the magician, inadvertently cried out loud:

"It's so big! Just what is it?"

The magician immediately brought his face close to Saito, who had unwittingly cried out. "A very

rarely seen face...”

I’m suspected, Saito thought, assuming a straight posture. The magician meticulously measured Saito up.

“Let me ask you - who is the general that commands the Second Army of the Holy Republic of Albion?”

Saito tensed up.

A general!? How am I supposed to know things like this? Looking around him, all he could see were the beads of the sweat on everyone’s foreheads. *Crap, the success of the mission depends all on my answer. But... I have no idea what the general’s name is.*

The enemy magician pressed his face closer, glaring fiercely at him, and said:

“What’s wrong? You don’t know? You don’t even know the name of the Sir General who protects this place? Do you really hail from Albion? Spit it out!!”

Saito’s mind began plunge into disarray. And, having plunged into disarray...his mind was completely blank.

“Tokugawa Ieyasu.”

He made up such an answer. When it came to general’s names, he only knew this one.

“What Tokugawa Ieyasu?! Where’s he from?! Why couldn’t you give a more appropriate answer?!” shouted Louise as she ran.

“It’s not like there was another choice! He was the only one I knew!”

“Whatever, I won’t blame you for now.”

No, rather it was all his fault, but nothing could be done now. Louise continued:

“But why didn’t you just take care of them like usual? There was only a few of them!”

When Saito had replied “Tokugawa Ieyasu”, the magician was taken aback, before yelling “Suspicious persons!” and launching a surprise attack with the troll.

Saito was originally going to block their attacks...but was sent flying by the troll in one hit.

The overwhelming strength of the gigantic humanoid creatures...it was difficult to endure, even though he was Gandalf. And there were almost ten of those monsters, to boot. *Even if I can’t kill them, I should be able to at least resist their attacks...* However, today’s Saito was not the same as his usual self.

“What’s wrong, Partner? Why don’t I sense any enthusiasm from you?”

After blocking enemy attack, even Derflinger said. Somehow, with Rene’s on others magic cover, they were able to repel the enemy and run away. However, since most of Dragon knights were "dot" mages, they quickly ran out of magic.

The number of chasers increased while they were trying to escape. Residents all along the street slightly opened windows and anxiously watched the chase.

At that time, from the other side of the town, the explosive sound was heard. The main force's attack started.

“The attack started!”

Louise firmly primed her lips. Their mission to assist in the main force's attack by creating disturbance... failed.

“It’s because of you!”

She shouted at Saito, who ran next to her.

“Wha-what...”

Saito muttered frustrated.

His body felt heavy.

Usually...if he gripped a weapon, his body felt light, like it just grew wings, his arms and legs moved freely... but now it somehow felt like it was bound with elastic.

Saito cannot move faster than his usual self, though they still could fight... it's pointless. It is impossible to fight against mage and his monster pal. They can do nothing but run away.

“Why you are so useless at most crucial moments? Hey!”

The moment when irritated Louise shouted, an orc group came out of the corner of the street in front.

Troll from the back, orcs from the front

They were completely caught in. There was no way to counterattack.

Rene wiped his lips.

“I wanted to die in the sky at least.”

“Well, I wouldn't be happy dying from a crash.”

The demi-humans started closing in... but then, looked up into the sky...

Booooooooooom! - the group of orcs ahead blazed up suddenly.

“It's dragon knights!”

Rene and others shouted. Saito looked up into the sky as well.

The dragon knight corps have fallen from the sky shooting spells or magic breaths and drove the enemy away.

“The colleagues of the third company.” Rene shouted. Saito looked up into the sky.

Dressed up in white clothes, Julio was riding the first wind dragon. There were ten knights. Five went after trolls, while other five landed around Saito and others.

“Quickly, get on!”

Julio shouts. Saito, Rene and others hastily jumped onto dragons. After confirming that all members got on the dragon, Julio lifted up.

“We saw you being chased from above.” Julio said.

Louise, feeling relieved, patted her chest, and said thanks to Julio.

“Thank you. We survived.”

“Don't thank us yet.”

Discouraged Louise's shoulders dropped.

“We...failed the mission. No good...”

Julio pointed to the ground.

“Indeed. There doesn't seem to be that much of influence in the general situation.”

The power of Tristain-Germania united armies was huge. The Albion that army consisted only of the demi-humans, which with their large bodies were not able to fight in tight streets, were now retreating.

“But, differently from the scouting mission, the powers used in diversion weren’t much of use...” Julio said and Louise looked down.

“But I cannot understand using such cute girl like you as a ‘tool’. Well, I am not soldier.”

Saito, sitting behind Louise, intervened.

“You are not a soldier?”

“I am Shinto priest, servant of god, not army.”

Saito ruminated Julio’s words. What a sly guy – he thought, but didn’t voice it out.

“That’s right, I think so too.” Saito nodded.

“Hey Louise! Are you all right? Why aren’t you complaining? Will those generals be angry for us failing the mission?”

However, Louise declared clearly.

“I wish. Seems not everything is possible. ”

Saito, hearing such Louise’s words, fell silent, feeling odd again.

* * *

The Germania-Tristain united army took over the City of South Gotha in about one week from the beginning of attack.

Damage was negligible. Huge demi-humans were not capable to move well in the urban area suited for humans, and were defeated in even one on one battles.

The town was occupied smoothly, due the residents' cooperation as well. The tow residents felt grudge against the Albion army as it took all their supplies, and one by one they cooperated with Allied Forces. They informed Allied Forces about the buildings where the demi-humans lurked and fought together.

And, the end of the fourth week of Wynn's month, during day of the week of Inge, in the central plaza of South Gotha City, the town liberation was declared.

All city council members of South Gotha, including mayor, the citizens and the governing staff of the Tristain-Germania united army have gathered.

Going up on the platform constructed at the center of the plaza, general of united army, supreme commander De Poitiers greeted.

“Thus, I declare the City of South Gotha liberation. I give the limited self-government right to the South Gotha city council under the supervision of Tristain and Germania governments.”

The shout of joy bolted up from residents who were nursing a grouch for the present Albion government.

Among them...Saito was staring at his left-hand.

He gripped Derflinger with his right hand.

Then... the runes slightly shone. He could not feel same dazzling light as always. It felt as if the batteries started cutting running out.

“Not good mate.”

Derflinger muttered. Saito nodded.

“It’s in a bad condition.”

Since recent faint mission he had such feeling. The body felt heavy, movements were slow. No power.

“It’s over for me, partner.” Saito sighted.

“Don’t say that. Gandalf’s power lies in the strength of the heart. Partner’s heart was shaken. In other words, you lost your motivation.”

“What?”

“I do not know. Who do you think should know more? Not me, the problem is in your heart, partner. Well, I can guess though...”

Derflinger shook.

“It’s about your noble sweetheart. Haven’t I told you before? Strong emotions are the only source of Gandalf’s power. Now you started to mistrust your master. You doubt if your master is worth protecting or not. Your emotions were shaken. And the power left.”

“...”

“Wizard and familiar. When they trust each other, their power doubles. Legendary ones are not really different.”

Saito thought absent-mindedly.

The way it is now, I cannot fight, right?

An uneasy thought crossed his mind...

But I guess, it doesn’t matter, Saito stole a quick glance at his master.

Louise was having a long talk with the Shinto priest in Romalia.

Though Saito saw it, he ignored them. Like when he saw her close to Wardes, heavy feeling of helplessness covered his shoulders.

What about it... If Louise is taken away by him, you won’t be angry? He thought like that. Something buried deep in the heart, started to tremble.

Saito’s feelings sunk further when thinking so, he was wrapped by deep helplessness.

The great general on the platform, was giving a fiery speech. As if the Albion was already defeated and the victory of his army was doubtless. These words entered through one ear and left through the other.

For what I am fighting in here?

Not long time ago, the reason was clear.

For Louise.

Louise is the reason.

Girl, whose sight makes my heart throb...

However, what if it is a girl who rejects my love as well?

What if Louise doesn’t want to know me anymore?

If you are not loved, why you are still hanging around?

I do not know.

I do not know?

No... the mind refuses to admit that reason. That feeling.

He thought.

He could not allow for Louise's attitude hurt him this much.

* * *

Meanwhile, on the other side, Louise, who was a long talk with Julio, felt absent-minded as well. She looked at Julio. He was a pleasant sight. There wasn't a girl who would not be attracted to him.

However, she only had her eyes set on her familiar. Occasionally, she stole quick side-glances at him. Saito looked at this direction and looked hurt.

Heee, now isn't that jealousy.

Familiar's habit is jealousy now.

Hee, heeeeeeeeeee, Louise sang a song of victory in her heart.

Though a smile threatened to break through, she desperately tried to suppress it.

Satisfaction!

Now get a slight grasp of what I was feeling all this time, she muttered in her mind.

"Miss Valliere."

"Ah, yes! W-what?"

Julio smiled.

"Excuse me. I am being called, will have to leave you for a moment."

"Eh?"

Julio elbows his way through people until he stood in front of the general on the platform. Julio's pretty face made South Gotha's women sigh. Isn't this officer handsome? He is not an officer but a Shinto Priest? One could hear whispers all around.

It looked like in front of general De Poitiers not only Julio but some other noble's lined up as well.

After confirming that all nobles gathered up in front of him, the general twitched his mustache.

"Eeh, I introduce these brave men to you all. They fought in South Gotha's liberation war, like legendary heroes they stood their ground with weapons in their arms. Only by their efforts this marvellous victory was achieved. Thus, as a general authority, I present them with White Hair Soul's medal."

Applauses rang.

Next, the officer call the recipient's names in order.

"De Vinuiyu, independent gun infantry battalion, the second company commander, Guiche de Gramont!"

"Y-yes!"

Louise's mouth went agape.

"Guiche?" as in Guiche, the Academy of Magic classmate?

"He and his men, bravely fought in the streets single-handedly. More so, they were the first to clean streets from orcs. The mission was a success and they free up more than a few dozen of houses. Applaud him and his men!"

Thunderous applause rang. Guiche, with a wide yet somewhat shy, accepted the reward on the neck. A young person, with a similar face to his, came out and clung to Guiche.

Psst, I heard that field marshal's Garmont's youngest child. There now is the second son... Nooo, could it be The Lion's child... rumors flew.

Louise felt strange. That stupid Guiche is rewarded? Can't be, I wonder what will Montmorency say when she hears that! Maybe change her opinion a little?

Apparently, it was an elder brother that clung to him. He didn't look comfortable while receiving his older brother's blessings.

Somehow she envied Guiche.

Blessed by a family, and admitted by them...

Though Louise military achievements were much bigger than Guiche's, things like these could not be done in publicity.

However, once this war ends... when the peace comes... she will tell her family about her large military achievements and loyalty to the mother-country.

Maybe then they will change their opinion about her. But for now, she cannot stumble and take even slightest credit for her own achievements

When thinking she remembered of Saito's mistakes. The feint mission sneaking into the town failed thanks to Saito. She watched him, while throwing occasional side glances.

The user of legendary power. A mistake in using them and they got themselves in a pitch yesterday. Saito should be more prudent, Louise thought.





Chapter 6 – Truce [PREVIEW]

In Tristania, capital of Tristain, inside of the work room, a 17 year old queen closed her eyes in silent prayer.

It was pretty cold in the work room, where all of useless decoration were taken away.

Like in a mausoleum.

In the center of the room, all wrapped up in black dress and covered with thick veil, Henrietta was kneeling.

In front of her stood a small altar, decorated with a small Founder Brimir's image on the inside.

Founder Brimir's image looked like it was mould for Halkeginia's advent.

His hands extended wide as if opening the door, an abstract image. It is not easy to see him as a person.

The reason for that is that drawing founders traits in details was held to be disrespectful.

To tell the truth, no one knew founders detailed

traits anyway.

While she was silently praying, she heard someone knocking on the door.

"Your Majesty, it's me." Cardinal Mazarini's voice.

At first she tried to grab the wand and recite the 'Unlock' spell... but then Henrietta shook her head, placed the wand on the table, stood up and unlocked the door.

Mazarini, entered Henrietta's work room, and apologized as she puckered up her brows.

"Were you in the middle of work? Forgive my impoliteness."

"It's all right." Henrietta answered.

"I'm not so sure about that. You were praying from dawn till evening. Even if I go somewhere or come back, it's still the same."

Mazarini watched her coolly. The rumors that, after the Albion invasion Henrietta prayed all day long, were true.

Henrietta tried to explain herself.

"This powerless queen can do nothing but offer her prayers."

"Why you are dressed up in black? White suits Your Majesty much better."

"It's a war. Many officers and men have fallen. I'm mourning."

Mazarini, shifting his eyes in embarrassment, reported to Henrietta.

"Yesterday, our Allied Forces captured South Gotha. This way, our positions in Londonium were



secured.”

“Please send my congratulations to general De Poitiers.”

“Certainly. One more thing...”

“Bad news?”

“That’s right. Allied Forces demanded the replenishment of food. It is necessary to send it at once.”

“But, based on the calculations, it'll take another 3 weeks”,

Mazarini said while looking at the report in his hand.

“Obusousugot city resources were emptied. Albion army had to give some to the local residents.”

“Are enemies worried about the food as well?”

“No. The purpose is to make our army worried. They foresaw our food delivery and took all the food from the residents.”

“That was cruel.”

“It's a war.”

Henrietta nodded.

“Please arrange.”

“Certainly. However... our treasury is making us more and more worried.”

“And minister of finances?”

“He is conferring with the Galia ambassador.”

“Galia?”

“The debt application. It takes a lot of money to fight.”

Henrietta watched her own hand. Then she said in constrained voice.

“We have to win. So, we only to have to win. We will return money from Albion’s purse then.”

“Though the day when that purse is obtained seems to be going away a little.”

“What?”

Henrietta's face became cloudy. Bad news seemed to favor this side.

“The enemy application for the truce came.”

“Truce? For how long?”

From the day after tomorrow, until the ending of the advent festival. It is a custom that between advent festivals the war also takes a break.”

The advent festival continues till the tenth, the biggest festival in Halkeginia. Because the advent festival starts during the first day of the new year... it will start after another week or less.

“Fighting will stop for as many as two weeks? No way! Custom or not, such thing cannot be admitted! Moreover, they can’t be trusted as they shamelessly broke the truce agreement before! They tried to attack the academy of magic and take all children hostages! With such mean company...”

Academy of Magic was attacked the next day that the invasion fleet had left. Though students were fortunately safe, repressing it still took some victims.

“Though it doesn’t inspire confidence, we don’t have much to choose from. We still need to bring over the food. Until then, the army cannot move.”

“Then drop Londonium for another week! All fleet! All troops! Why do you think we used our trump card – Void?!” Henrietta pressed Mazarini on.

Prime minister gave an advice for the enraged queen.

“Your Majesty. Soldiers and generals are also people. Making them overwork will not lead you anywhere. Though I understand that you want to reach the conclusion early... concede here.”

Henrietta held herself back and hung her head.

“...I said too much. Please forget. You are right about it all.”

After immediately signing the truce treaty, Mazarini stood up, but stopped at the door and turned around.

“Your Majesty, when the war ends, take these black clothes off. They do not suit you.”

Henrietta did not answer.

Mazarini said in a gentle, father-like voice.

“Let it be. It’s enough, mourn only for your mother.”

After the cardinal left, Henrietta let out a sigh.

“Aah. What I am saying – Louise of Void?”

She muttered in a sad, silent voice.

“... for the goal, I am changing an important person into a tool.”

* * *

In South Gotha, the third day after signing the truce with sacred Albion republic came into being.

Inside the room of the inn that Allied Forces took over, Louise sat in front of the fireplace.

In four days the new year will begin. Then, founder's advent festival would start.

Though the war had not ended yet; the town was wrapped in strangely restless atmosphere. No, war may be the reason why they want to act so loudly. For the people of Albion it could be the only chance to relax.

The truce period was like a present from the founder; and South Gotha citizens as well as the Tristain and Germania soldiers, wanted to enjoy themselves to the fullest.

People, dressed up in various colorful clothes, strode cheerfully through the town.

Because Albion, the floating continent, was located 3,000 mails above the sea level, winters were sudden and harsh. A skinny person like Louise was exceedingly sensitive to the cold. She experienced Albion’s winter for the first time. All wrapped up blanket, she trembled in front of brightly burning fireplace.

Louise called Saito, who was sitting alone, away from her, doing something.

“It’s cold, isn’t it. Why don’t you come in front of the fireplace?”

There is no answer. Then Louise recalled the recent fight after meeting again.

Louise complained to Saito.

“Hey, Saito. Are you listening to me? It is cold! Are you still worrying about the other day, well I forgave you already! You must stay healthy! It’s a familiar’s responsibility!”

There is no answer again. Saito sat on the side of the bed, his back turned to Louise, doing

something furiously.

“What are you doing?”

Still wrapped up in blanked, she approached him and saw Saito doing something with the wine bottle’s cork.

“Wha-“

She stretched her neck, trying to see, but he hid it.

“Show me!” Louise pushed Saito aside. Saito showed no resistance.

On top of the small cork was a small cut.

“What?”

Saito kept silently plucking the cork. Leaving small cuts with his fingernails.

Apparently he was killing time by cutting cork.

...Gloomy. Too gloomy. Such way of killing time looked way too depressing.

“Stop it, already...Too gloomy...”

Saito quietly muttered.

“Not gloomy.”

“Annoying familiar!”

“Mole.”

Mole. Louise does not like him. She wants lofty boy.

He became irritated while thinking so.

“What mole? Get yourself together!”

She pushed him away, dumbfounded, Saito tumbled,

“Hey, answer me. Hey! Hey, hey! Mole. Mo-mole.”

Rubbing his cheek, Saito stared at Louise.

Louise shrugged uncomfortably and thought angrily. Yada, wasn’t it like that, when he pushed me down the other day? Get yourself together! Enough! Will that idiot familiar attack me now? Ya-yada – her body trembled.

That’s why she tried to provoke him. But she could never admit it to the person in question.

However, Saito simply stood up and walked towards the door.

“W-where are you going?!” She asked, disappointed.

“For a walk.” He answered briefly/ And then Saito was gone out of the room.

Louise came dragging the loose blanket, back to the fireplace, and sat down hugging her knees. Derflinger, who was leaning against the wall, called out Louise.

“Foolish woman.”

After these words, Louise’s face popped out of the blanket.

“W-what... He’s at fault! He always hesitates...”

“And who do you think is the cause of that?”

“I d-don’t know!”

At a loss, Louise shouted.

“Then I’ll tell you. Partner is completely convinced that you don’t like him.”

Louise bit her lips.

“I-it’s natural! He is a familiar, and I am a noble!”

“Really?”

Louise’s face crumbled. Showing her girlish side, Louise sulked.

“H-he is evil. What if I am cold and lone, but he goes with other girls instead...”

“What did you say when he confessed? Instead you talked about something you haven’t witnessed and left, all what that housemaid said was ‘unbuttoned’. Thus affair is doubtful, but you selfishly made your own conclusion.”

“Uuh...”

“Haah, therefore, you put out a display of flirting with a handsome boy. Don’t you think you overdid it? Anyway, if only it was just about display, but you just had to go and make that cruel remark. ‘If I would get riding behind anyone’s back, then he should at least be good-looking’ was it.”

Louise cast her eyes down.

“When you look at it that Romalia priest is indeed better looking. One can’t compare the faces. It’s like comparing flying creatures - fly and phoenix. Or land walking creatures - mole and lion. Or water creatures – water fly and swan.”

“...Aren’t you exaggerating?”

“Probably, anyhow, it wasn’t about the face. Partner patiently did not go to the east lands , just to keep you company. To you he even confessed ‘love’. I guess such ‘loyalties embodiment’ is said to be no good at all. His pathetic self can’t compete in handsomeness with other men. However, partner shows courage in trouble, because he said he loves you...”

Louise listened to words, for five minutes, and blushed furiously. Then, she come to the window and looked outside, looked behind the curtain, opened the closet, sought under the desk, and once she finally confirmed that there was none in the room to listen, she turned back to the legendary sword.

“Hey, is it true? To whom he said that? How?”

“Partner is very single-minded about that. Though it’s up to you - to believe or not.”

With a blush on her cheeks, Louise became silent.

"Really, it was obvious that partner looked to be in a bad mood.”

Louise bluntly puffed her cheeks.

“I-I got it already. I forgive him! Isn’t it good enough?!”

“Then apologize, tell those little, gentle words.”

“Me? Why?! Apologizing to him...”

“Normally it should be done by both, however now it is your turn to give in, because you were nasty.”

For a while, Louise groaned – Uuuh, auuu, iiiii – regretting.

“I got it already! Only need to apologize! Just apologize!”

She shouted. Was that an apologizing attitude?

However, Derflinger muttered warningly.

“But partner was seriously sulking this time... he was truly disgusted by you, you know. Such apology might not be enough.”

Louise started to look troubled.

“Worried?”

“D-don’t be stupid! It will be all right! No one can ask more for an apology!”

“Hmmm”

Derflinger became silent. Because he wasn’t saying anything for a while, Louise grew impatient.

Eventually Louise became restless. She took up a firewood which was placed near the fireplace and ‘Piiiiin’ started to peel it off.

“Gloomy way of killing time.”

“Shut up! Well, then, tell me! Teach me what do I have to do!”

“Love.”

“Haaa?”

“Tell - I am in love with Saito!”

“I can’t say such thing!”

“Do you hate him?”

“I-it’s not that...”

Louise hesitated.

“Well, then, aren’t you in love?”

“I-it’s not that! Anyway, I am saying that I want to say, that I am not saying that I am saying, that I am not in love! Uuuuh! Idiot! Worn-out sword!”

“Haah, if you are like that, then pushing down is out of the question, right?”

“That’s a splendid idea.”

“Really?”

“Splendid. Stop joking! What kind of idea is that, for a master-sama to push down! Seriously...”

“You won’t push him down?”

“It’s out of the question! Stupid!”

“Aah, but being pushed down by a loving partner, and then embraced tightly, was pleasant, wasn’t it?”

With scarlet blush on her cheeks, Louise cast her eyes down, and said in a tiny voice.

“...that, c-could you talk about something else?” she asked.

“Then push him down.”

“I-I don’t want to do that! Seriously! I’ll only embarrass myself. Besides it would be hard to push Gandalf down. Hey.”

“Saying so.”

“Anyway, I am La Valliere’s third daughter. I can’t say I love you to such a foolish familiar. Thus, not love. Really. He is the one who loves me, well, I admit, it feels nice. It feels great when he worships me. But it’s not enough! Do you understand?!”

“I understand... you are troubled by obstacles...”

“Anyway, faster, teach me of another way to mend his mood.”

“Make love.”

Louise slowly stood up, and started to cast a spell.

“It won’t blow you off. I’ll melt you. Answer now, without joking. Do you anything else to offer?”

Derflinger trembled.

“I’m over.”

He muttered.

“What?”

“It’s very hard for me to think. I’m just a sword. Legendary.”

“Because you are legendary, you should be more attentive to remarks.”

“No words are good enough, if you hide your feelings, behind unbreakable pride.”

Louise stepped back, thought for a while, and nodded.

“...What you said, is probably true. Though you are a sword you can understand human inner thoughts.”

“It’s because I lived so many years among them. And worked with them. It comes naturally. Now then, speaking of your situation...”

Louise and Derflinger discussed for a while... deciding a strategy.

* * *

Saito sat down on a bench in a central plaza of south Gotha, watching the people passing the road. Soldiers of Tristain and Germania, and citizens of south Gotha all passed with lamplights. Allied Forces that occupied the streets; walked proudly thrusting out their chests. As it was a truce period, they got drunk, cut loose, and ran after young girls, and ended up being shouted at by noble officers.

However faces of either citizens of south Gotha, unlike defeated countries people, did not seem very sad. Sure, they were not pleased by the fact that their town was flooded by additional people. Yet, Aristocrat faction Reconquista, present Albion political power, was not in a great favor here.

Besides, because they delivered food, Allied Forces seem to be accepted as the liberation army.

Though the rampart was partially destroyed, the attack upon the urban area, was avoided as much as possible, so there were hardly any looses for the town and citizens. In relation to their wars end and the start of anticipated advent festival, citizens were smiling broadly.

“Haah.” Saito let out a sigh.

Within the happy town the only dark face is mine.

Then he stared at the rune on his left hand.

Haa, the power passed on a big load to me, he thought. When this war ends, I will surely go to east lands. Louise will not need me anymore....

Thinking this way, he grew even more lonely. And nostalgia hit him again. Saito recalled the hometown.in the different world. In the alien world... in the foreign town of the foreign country that he did not get used to, nostalgia filled his chest suddenly.

Being wrapped up in such painful feelings... Saito was called from the back.

“Saito-san!”

Saito, for a moment could not recognize whose voice it was. That voice shouldn't be here on this street.

The next moment arms wrapped up tightly around Saito from the back, and he was pushed to the ground.

“Yaaan, being able to meet so soon! Feels great! Ka-n-ge-ki!”

Barely thinking, he turned around, just to see a shining Siesta's face, with a broad smile.

“S-Siesta? Why?”

Saito panicked. Why is Siesta here? This is an Albion, continent on the cloud. It's not the place for the Magic Academy's maid Siesta to be in.

“Hmmm? What did Siesta-chan meet here?”

A deep voice came from the back. It sounded sweetened.

“Manager Scarron?”

Manager Scarron was an effeminate man, dressed up in tight leather clothes. He managed the “Charming Faries” inn where Saito and Louise worked one summer. And next to him was Scarron's daughter Jessica. Saito stared at them all with widely opened eyes.

* * *

“Consolation corps?”

In a café facing the plaza, Saito asked loudly. Slurping the beer, smiling Scarron said, while puckering up his brows.

“Souyoo! The reason for that is that additional food needed to be sent, thus the consolation corps was organized! To go to Albion...”

Scarron looked at the piling up dishes and shook his head.

“The dishes are horrible! Only beer to drink! Women too thin! What a notorious place!”

Indeed, if you look around the plaza, shops serving wine can not be found. Only tea and the beer. The Albion people do not drink wine, Scarron explained, plainly puckering up his brows.

“Really! Such an unpalatable beer is the same as drinking phlegm, Tristain people with taste would never drink this! Therefore, Tristianian inns can earn much from such business trips. I want to open White Arrow's Inn here. This way 'Charming Fairies' inn would establish next to Royal families! Aaah, the honor!”

Scarron wiggled his body. Girls, brought from the inn, seconded him in joyful chorus.

“Honor! Mi mademoiselle!”

Scarron rose up above the table. Saito almost burst into tears.

“Is Saito-kun that a soldier-san? Why did you come to the Albion?”

“No, I'm not a soldier...”

“Let it out. Mi mademoiselle is a man, he'll understand.”

Mi mademoiselle being a man still needs to be confirmed, Saito thought while nodding vaguely.

Then he remembered Siesta, sitting next to him and smiling broadly.

“But, why is Siesta coming along?” He asked.

“She’s a relative.”

Frightened to death Saito stared at Scarron. Could someone as sweet as Siesta be Scarron’s relative?

“M-manager’s..?”

“Yes. From the mother side...”

Siesta muttered shamefully.

“Could be that the tavern where Saito-san worked during this year summer...”

“He worked in it. That’s how we got acquainted.”

Jessica explained. Then Jessica looked at Saito across the table.

“Siesta is my cousin. You know each other, right?”

Indeed, they both had black hair. Which was unusual in this world.

Siesta hesitated before saying.

“As soon as Saito left, the school was attacked by an Albion burglar.”

“Eh? Eeh?! Eh?”

Saito was surprised by the topic. Due to consideration of the troop morale, the news about own country hardly ever reached the battlefield.

“We did not understood what was happening when the lodging-house shook...There was a big uproar...Some died.”

Siesta said with a sad face.

Saito was worried about the people left in the school. Are the people that he knows included into ‘Dead People’ list?

“Who became victims?”

“As commoners, we were not told about details...” Siesta said apologetically.

What if it is a person I know, Saito thought. Though it is sad when whoever dies, but it is a lot more saddening when it happens to a person one knows.

“And the school has been closed until the war ends. I thought of what to do and decided to help uncle with his inn.”

“Sie-chan worked here in the past.”

“When I got to the inn, I saw uncle Scarron-san and Jessica's packing luggage together... They explained that they are going to Albion.”

“That’s why you decided to go along?”

When Saito said so, Siesta nodded with a blush.

“Ye-yeah...and...”

“And?”

“I thought I will be able to meet S-Saito-san here...”

Jessica leaned over, scrutinizing the pair.

“Eh? What? Siesta and Saito are intimate? I was certain it was Louise...”

After Jessica’s words, Siesta’s eyes shone.

“Is Miss Valliere doing fine?”

“Y-yes” Saito nodded.

Uncomfortable silence followed.

Grinning, Jessica approached Saito.

“So you are still together. Sorry, I misunderstood.”

“No, not particularly ...” Saito muttered, feeling mixed emotions.

“Aaah, Louise-chan is here as well? Then lets go and greet her.” Scarron said while fiddling with his fingernails.

* * *

Meanwhile, Louise, under the guidance of Derflinger, developed an “How to mend Saito’s mood” operation.

Following Derflinger’s instructions, Louise bought various materials from the inn shop.

“This! You must be joking!”

Louise screamed at the sword.

“It’s not a joke. It’s a proper apology to my partner.”

Derflinger said in a serious voice.

“But why as an animal?! I’m a noble, a noble! Understand?!”

“Because of your high-handed status, how else you are going to apologize?”

“So you think turning into familiar helps?!”

“That’s right. It’s a great strategy. ‘Saito, I’m sorry for my malicious remarks. For today, I’ll be your familiar.’”

Derflinger said, imitating Louise’s voice.

“If you were to say ‘Please’ in such state, then maybe a partner, as he is rather simple, would forgive all your crimes?”

Louise shook her head and said.

“Mo, but not looking like this animal.”

“Huu”

“Why black cat?!”

“Black cat is the most popular familiar. Therefore, black cat suits. It is a comprehensible. What is important is comprehension.”

Louise cheeks blushed, while she stared at the black cat costume material, lined up in front of her.

“Well at least I will make these parts by myself.”

Louise took out the sewing set that she borrowed from the inn, and from fur, leather, and strings started making 'Black cat's clothes', as Derflinger said.

While grappling with a fur for a while...she completed the Black cat’s clothes. Though Louise had zero talent in sewing, somehow she still managed to make such simplistic shapes.

Since now, the clothes were completed, Louise went near the mirror, to witness the destructive

power of the black cat's costume.

"W-what's this! With such clothes I would embarrass myself before everyone!"

"It suits you well" Derflinger said in a composed voice.

"Why ears!"

Louise shouted while pointing to the object on her head, which imitated cat's ears. It was also cut out from black fur and attached to the top of her head.

"It looks nicely."

"But what about these clothes! Lewd! It's lewd!"

Trembling, Louise pointed at her image in the mirror. In short, only the key parts of her body were covered with black fur.

Black fur tight cloth was rolled around her breasts. She wore furry panties too. And, like socks, bits of fur were placed around her ankles.

The tail, made from remaining material, ran down her buttocks.

"No, every part of black cat costume is splendid." Derflinger said like it was somebody else's problem.

"What! Just a look at it makes ones head boil!"

Louise said in a painful voice. She now regretted listening to the sword.

"No, your body is young, it starts to originate a wild charm. Partner will be trounced."

Louise suddenly stopped.

"This is one, flirty attire, right? Partner will instantly jump on it."

"N-not of that sort. Stop joking." While saying so, Louise began making poses in front of the mirror. Not fully convinced.

Fidgeting her fingers hesitatingly, she bent tilting her head, then, with both hands on the floor, she turned around and tried out a sobbing pose.

"What. You want to be jumped on?"

"N-no! T-trying out, I'm just trying out! Honestly! I just feel uneasy!"

Eventually Louise became pleased with the pose.

"Ah, it's nice. Cute."

She said. And received an agreement from Derflinger.

"Good. Stick with it."

However, once calming herself down, her embarrassment kicked in again.

"I-it's impossible after all! Impossible!"

"This pose is just to raise his spirit, that's all"

"Even so, hey.... But somewhat, hey... I, duke's daughter... legendary...As expected... I can't do such thing. Don't feel like it."

"I tell you. Because of you the partner is sulking."

"Uuh..."

"Just do it for one single day. Use woman's important charms. Yes."

"...But."

Derflinger used the trump card.

“Do you want to lose to that maid?”

Louise’s eyebrows shot up.

“What? Lose to whom?”

“No, nothing to worry about! As expected from ‘Void’!

“I won’t happen. M-maid will be the one to lose.”

At that moment. The doorknob of the room turned.

“Aaah, the partner came back.”

Then Louise breathes deeply in and out, stood up in front of the door.

“Remember. Noble’s daughter. Leave your pride behind, be charming. All right?”

“I-I know!”

The next moment, the door swung open.

Louise blushed, squeezing her eyes shut, bent, forced herself to not cover her breasts with her hands, placed the thumb of the left hand under the lips, put the right hand on her hips, and screamed out the previously with Derflinger decided words.

“Yoyoyo-yo-you are my master for today!”

Then...Louise waited for the partner's reaction.

However, there was no answer. It felt like infinity.

What! Though? Rejected? The heat of anger boiled in Louise's head.

“Say something! I won’t wait forever!”

Then, Louise opened her eyes... however it wasn’t sight of Saito that greeted her eyes.

“M-m-m-miss Valliere?”

The one who stood there was pale-faced, trembling Siesta.

“Ara, Louise-chan. What is this costume?”

“Pu. Pupu. When did you turn into cat?”

It wasn’t just Siesta. There were Scarron and Jessica too. Saito stuck his head out from the backs of his friends.

“Wait. Brought sake. N? Why didn't anyone enter the room?”

Then Saito noticed Louise dressed up in black cat’s clothes.

“Wh-what’s the meaning of this? You...”

Louise screamed.

“Noo!”



* * *

“Louise-chan is so cute.” Scarron muttered, sitting on a chair.

“Pu. Pupu. Pupupu.” Jessica held her mouth, desperately trying to suppress her laughter.

Frowning Siesta watched the chipped ball of fur that Louise used.

Louise hid herself behind the covers, and did not get out from the bed.

Though everything calmed down, there was no reply.

Confused Saito asked Derflinger.

“Wha-what happened?”

“Well, that’s masterpiece...”

After his words, blanked flew up, Louise, who completely forgot about her black cat’s clothes she was wearing, flew out of the bed, kicked the sword and silently returned back to the bed.

Siesta stared at Louise.

Saito looked doubtful.

Jessica looked out of the window.

“Snow started to fall, getting cold.” She muttered.

“Advent festival of snow... waah, how romantic.” Scarron wiggled his body.



Chapter 7 – The Reason To Fight [PREVIEW]

Full-bloomed fireworks went up, illuminating the night sky.

From under the many tents placed in South Gotha City plaza, people shouted with joy.

Because Allied Forces were stationed here, the town was filled up with almost twice as many tents, since soldiers were staying here it was overflowed with temporary housing tents. There were only a limited number of lodging houses that soldiers could rent. Merchants came from various places to sell soldiers various things. The city of South Gotha was wrapped in an unprecedented vigor.

And, heralding the beginning of the Yarra month, today was double as vigorous than the first day of the first week.

The biggest festival in Halkeginia, The advent festival, started. For ten days from today, one can drink, sing and cause the fuss every day.

Louise and Saito drank alcohol in the grand tent of 'Charming Fairies' inn, which was opened in the plaza.

Surrounding Rene, there were every one from the Dragon knight secondary division too. Every main officer, including Guiche, could have been seen in here as well. Both senior military officers and soldiers were prohibited from eating and drinking in the inns of South Gotha. They got drunk, causing residents trouble – thus it is easier to observe them if they are held together. Because of that, the inn, which made a business trip from Tristain, was full.

After the black cat clothes were seen, except when necessary, Louise did not talk at all. She was very embarrassed. She was silently sipping her drink alone.

Because Louise is weak to alcohol, only a little bit of wine were poured in her glass, there were more of fruit juices, honey, and water put in. She kept on drinking it little by little. Still, her face was already red.

She was casting glances at Saito through the corner of her eyes.

Saito was drinking with Rene party, and with Guiche, whom he met again a little while ago. Differently from that time with Louise, he was relatively happy. Seeing that, Louise poured in more wine.

Bleary-eyed Louise rose her glass.

“Seconds!”

Louise saw a waitress running-up to her, turned her face away, and tried to call another one.

“Someone service me. Someone.”

“Place your order.” Siesta, with a calm expression, called out Louise.

“I haven’t called you.”

Louise glared at Siesta. And then, muttered.

‘Running around... like an idiot.’

Siesta, keeping the cheerful face, said.

“I do extra, for not being dressed in a black cat’s suit.”

Louise blushed. Siesta quietly drew her face to Louise’s, and murmured, while smiling.

“You are my master for today.”

Louise jumped up, shaking.

But then she had a second thought. There’s no time to rival with the maid. Besides I know the outcome of the war anyway. I’ll tell that, she chuckled in her mind. Louise put on a nice face and muttered.

“I-I was confessed to.”

Siesta’s eyebrows moved up. Louise did not miss her love rival’s reaction. That’s because Louise is a girl. She doesn’t have what I do. I won, after all! Louise became happy, and in order to sweeten her victory, she pressed Siesta on.

“That’s right. He said he favors me. What to do I wonder, I cannot stop thinking of you, he said. Really, such an impertinent familiar.”

Siesta listened to it with a smile.

“Heee. I am glad to hear that.” She said, though her eyes were not smiling at all.

“Besides, he pushed me down. Of course, I did not permit it! I mean, I do not like things like that. It’s not natural!”

“Flirt is repulsive but not selling.”

Siesta said. Louise caught a glance at the forehead and answered back.

“Not you.”

Two people continued to stare at each other.

That time... a muted sound of something hitting the tent was heard.

“N?”

“The snow! Snow!” Voices rang outside.

Indeed, through the entrance of the tent, one could see it snowing..

“Advent festival of snow...” Louise muttered.

“I dreamed of the advent festival of snow...” Siesta murmured with enchanted expression.

“Really?”

“Yes. In Tarbes it is warm even during the winter. Without too much snow...”

With her eyes sparkling like child’s, Siesta watched the snow outside the tent.

Then Siesta noticed Louise looking at her. The pair look at each other blushing. Then returned back to watching the snow.

Louise said, hiding her awkwardness.

“...It is calm somehow. Maybe we should also make truce for the advent festival.”

“Right.”

“Sit here.”

Louise urged Siesta to sit. Yes, Siesta sat demurely next to Louise with a nod.

Accepting Louise's proffered drink, Siesta bowed.

"Cheers!"

Feeling strange, the pair let their cups clink.

"Nice." Siesta said, with a blush from the alcohol on her cheeks.

"Feels like really being a noble."

They watched the snow falling through the opening of the tent by the snow.

"Beautiful...snow covering the buildings...like sugar" Siesta muttered.

"Well"

"Though it's such a beautiful land, why there is a war..."

Siesta said, while looking at Louise.

"S-sorry... I am not blaming Miss Valliere... I know you work hard for the country."

Louise cast her eyes down.

Siesta muttered staring at the wine in the bottom of her glass.

"...To tell the truth, I hate this war. Many people die. For what reason?"

"For what reason?"

"Why do you fight? Father... said that the reason is money. The capture of the enemy country can also be beneficial for the ruler to establish oneself. Is that it? Do you kill others for such reason?"

Louise thought. It might be true considering surrounding ministers. However, Henrietta is different. Because of the time they both spent together during their childhood, Louise understood her well. For Henrietta this war was about revenge. To defeat a hateful enemy who deprived a beloved person. This was the only intent in Henrietta's mind.

Siesta asked Louise, who was lost in thought.

"Why is Miss Valliere fighting?"

"Me?"

"That's right."

Is it because I wanted to help Henrietta? A little bit. But not really that.

For Louise this fight...

Seeing Louise being silent, Siesta looked down.

"I'm sorry. Its not a thing for me to listen, but..."

At that moment... a loud yell coming from Saito's table could be heard.

"Really! Don't be a fool!"

Louise and Siesta, startled by the voice, turned around.

"Ha! Who is a fool! What is so foolish about it!"

Guiche roared, while standing up.

Saito also stood up and pointed his finger at Guiche.



“What are you telling me! You are just doing it, to get some points in Montmorency’s eyes. Fool! If you would die, Monmon would be really sad!”

“A-are you insulting my actions!”

Guiche brandished the artificial rose.

Seems like it was a quarrel. Rene, who was drinking with them, said.

“Yeah, because you are a commoner, pride does not matter for you, but it is different for us.”

Saito stared at Rene and said.

“Honor this, honor that – its just a foolishness. Didn’t Dragon Knight unit died once already? Fear it a little! It’s weird! Aren’t you afraid of dying for the honor? That’s stupid. Only fools thing that way. Honor? It’s not worth dying for. Such thing that you are doing – I think it’s silly.”

“Saito!”

At that moment...Saito’s name was suddenly shouted. It wasn’t Rene or Guiche. It was Louise, who stood there, shaking in anger.

Saito slowly turned towards Louise.

“What?”

“You, apologize. Apologize to Guiche and Rene!”

“Whaat?”

“Insulting ‘Honor’ cannot be permitted.”

Louise said while trembling.

And Saito was the reason behind that.

I am being misunderstood...The things she thought to be important, had completely no importance to Saito, which made her annoyed.

Because of Saito’s fight... she completely forgot about her bad mood. Only Saito’s ‘Failed a mission, so what?’ came into her mind right now.

Saito answered back in an angry voice.

“The ones that you defend are them and not me?”

“Defend, what are you talking about? Honor is more important than life to me. If I were to lose it, I would not be a noble anymore. And if I am not a noble, then I am not me either. That’s why I can’t stand remarks denying honor right in front of me.”

Louise said clearly.

On the other hand, Saito noticed it too.

Saito knew that from the look of Louise’s eyes. When she was almost crushed by Fouquet’s golem, Louise showed the same expression as well.

At that time Louise shouted “I will not run away from the enemy, because I am a noble!”.

At that time he thought such Louise to be marvelous, but it was different now.

Aah, Saito understood.

He remembered Louise’s recent words.

“The death is a sad however...They died with a honor Honor... They died for great victory. Therefore, don’t feel sorry for them.”

Saito understood the true reason why he was sulky. Julio wasn’t the reason that separated them.

For Louise was this duty... this word honor really that important? Because he felt so, he got depressed so much.

Therefore, he made remarks about Guiche a little while ago.

What is it?

Is this honor so important?

“Then, you...”

Saito stared at Louise.

“You?”

“If you were ordered to die, would you die like these unreasonable guys?”

Saito said, pointing at Rene and others.

Louise bit her lip.

“Isn’t it unreasonable? Such impertinent...” Louise interrupted before he could finish.

“Die. I would.”

Her voice trembled.

“You...”

Saito was shocked. Louise completely composed, said.

“F-for Princess-sama and for the mother country. If ordered, I would give it away with pleasure.”

This Louise made Saito clink.

She said she would be ready to die so thoughtlessly.

And what about teacher’s Colbert letter. To be accustomed to death because of war! Seeing people die, the words resounded.

It all came back now. Really, is honor more important than us?

Saito pressed Louise on.

“Then what about me?”

“Heh?”

“If you are ordered to die, then should I die as well?”

Louise, looking perplexed, muttered misunderstanding.

“Wh-what... are you so afraid of death?”

“Whatareyo-“

“Coward! Everyone were ready to die, when agreeing to coming here!”

“Am I determined? Wasn’t I brought here by force as your attendant?”

“Then why haven’t you said so!”

“I haven’t been given a time to think! It was just – go here, go there, all the time!”

The two people shouted at each other in angry voices. People, eating and drinking within the tent, dumbfounded, watched such exchange of words between them.

“That... could you ease up little by now?” Rene, standing next to Guiche, finally brought Louise back to her senses.

She shook her head, and calmly informed Saito.

“Well... it’s embarrassing. Now, Saito, return to your room and have some rest. After that, we can calmly clear things out... This kind of anger won’t give anything.”

What...the talk isn’t over, and yet, she still feels uneasy in front others?

The moment he thought so...Saito realized one more thing.

He did not wanted to think about for a long time... Distance felt in Louise, the true reason behind this sense of incompatibility....

Could it be what Louise thinks of me?

He though that this question and the sense of distance between them was related.

Generals...used Louise’s ‘Void’ as a tool...

I am only “tool” for Louise as well.

Legendary familiar Gandalf.

His purpose of existence, is only to defend the master while he cast a spell...

In a word, I am an important tool in her road of defending honor....

Then, she surely needs to take care of his mood. Giving an occasional touch, as a reward.

“Then you are the same as those generals.”

Saito muttered.

“Ha! That, what are you saying...”

“I am just a ‘tool’ right? A familiar.”

Then he thrust Louise aside and walked out of the tent.

“Hey wait!” she shouted but Saito did not stop.

Siesta, who was sitting near by, stood up and ran after Saito. Then Louise angrily grabbed the jar of wine and poured her glass full, instead of honey and fruit juice, and drank up it up in one gulp.

* * *

Saito meandered through the snowing town. Though it is called an old town, the stones, were perfectly shaped, without cracks or misses. Though it was hard to believe, the town stayed the same for thousands of years, because the ‘Fixation’ spell was placed on it, long time ago.

It was a white town, because of the snow. The walls around the town and ramparts, were all covered with the scattering white snow, that danced in the sky.

And so he passed through such, burningly white street, when was called from behind.

“Saito-san.”

Turning around, he saw a sad Siesta standing. She wore black clothes and apron which design was different from the one seen in Academy of Magic. The design of her dress had slightly revealing neckline as well, this could be a preference of the 'Charming Fairies' inn.

“Siesta.”

Siesta ran up to Saito and clasped his hand.

“S-s...”

With a blush on her cheeks she hesitatingly tried to say something.

“S?”

“S-snowing, y-you’ll catch cold...”

“Cold? Not really...”

When he said so, Siesta started to weep.

“It’s bad. You will catch cold badly...”

The passers-by watched the couple with curious expressions. Saito panicked.

“S-Siesta... T-that...”

“Making a girl cry! Lady-killer!”

“What, going after country girl?”

People on the street started hooting.

Saito was embarrassed.

“Siesta, for now, let’s change the surroundings...”

He began to walk while holding the crying Siesta’s shoulder.

* * *

Since they could not return to, with Louise rented room, nor to “Charming Fairies’ inn, Saito and Siesta had to rent a room in a distant inn instead. In the town that was over flown with the soldiers and merchants it was very hard to find an empty room, but somehow, in the basement of one tattered tavern they were able to find a room and entered it.

“Taking one Ecu for such a shabby room.”

He complained while taking a seat on the bed. It was dim because the room was windowless. Though Siesta was still crying badly, she stopped once Saito gently patted her head.

“I’m sorry.”

Siesta said while biting her lower lip.

“What’s wrong?”

Saito asked.

“Poor Saito-san... Though he works hard, he gets such cold words...It is very saddening...”

“It’s all right.”

Saito said, in hopes to lighten up the mood for moment.

Siesta started to shiver.

Unheated room grew colder. Saito stood up and threw a few pieces of firewood into the fireplace. They were given some when booking the room. Other heating conveniences were not invented in Halkeginia yet. He stared blowing to make firewood burn more... and was silently hugged by Siesta from behind. Instinctively, he held his breath.

“I’m sorry...” Siesta said in tearful voice.

“Eh? No, it’s ok...I had no use of the money anyway...”

He thought she was grateful about booking the room, but he was wrong.

“Running off to such place...is troublesome.”

Siesta tightened her hug.

The fire spread upon the firewood... burning brightly. The room was half way underground, so the window still provided some of the light up. Facing towards the street, one could see feet of passers-by.

“Am I a nuisance?”

“Not at all. Feels very good.”

Siesta, muttered in a weeping voice again.

“Even so, isn’t it a war. If something happened to Saito-san, I, I...I hated not being able to see you again, so I decided to come. Thus I went with Jessica and others to Albion...”

While speaking, she gave in to her emotions.

Siesta began to weep raggedly again.

“I wanted to see you so much. And I am happy to see you, yet I cannot express myself. When speaking, I am blathering about various, not important things. Terrible.”

Siesta pressed her wet from tears cheek against his back.

“Well...”

“...I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry for crying.” Siesta muttered over and over again.

Saito turned around taking off Siesta's hand and patting her head with his left hand and wiping away the tears with the fingers of his right.

“Poor Saito-san. Brought from another world, yet keeps working hard without complaints. Cruel. It is so cruel. M-my important person...used as a tool...”

Saying so, while sobbing, Siesta looked at Saito’s face. Then, suddenly, Siesta tried to bring her lips close to his... but once he noticed what she is attempting to do, he tried to pull away.

But Saito could not pull his hand from her cheek. I do not want to separate, he thought.

Siesta, noticing the hesitation of Saito’s hand, wrapped her arms around Saito’s neck and quickly kissed him.

Being the first time that Siesta kissed me, her lips felt warm. Like everything about Siesta – warm and soft. Just like that bread that she allowed me to eat in the kitchen.

Siesta pulled away for a moment and looked at Saito's face through moistened eyes.

And then, she pressed her lips fiercely again. Using her body weight, Siesta pinned Saito to the floor.

Siesta’s black hair looked slightly red from the fireplace. Her cheeks glowed as well.

She was a gentle girl who was always near.

Siesta, with determined look in her eyes, pushed back the black hood and tried to remove her robe completely.

He wanted to say “W-wait”, but was silenced by the kiss.

The kiss was both – sweet and fierce at the same time, while blushing Siesta, placed a hand on her breasts. Such way, leaning herself upon him, Siesta traced Saito’s lips with her own over and over again.

Slightly separating their lips, she muttered.



“Love.”

All light up by the burning flames, Siesta looked pretty and wild, she was very tempting. Even when they shared a bath together she did not look as tempting.

Love and kisses must be what made her so tempting.

Capturing like a flame it makes a girl look better.

Siesta herself was not aware of her coquettish charms.

Still, not noticing that Saito stiffened, Siesta puckered up her lips.

“Jessica said – when you’ll meet a boy that you like you will do everything for him. I think it might be true, as right now I am ready to do everything.”

“T-t-that’s not...”

Saito tried to squeeze words out of his seemingly dry throat.

“So, please touch me.”

Because of the way she was clasping hands, the valley of her breast peeping out of her black dress was clearly visible, Saito turned his face away. Siesta gave a confused look.

“Do you hate it?”

She asked, Saito shook his head.

“It isn’t so. It isn’t why.”

Saito said in a tensed voice. He was a healthy boy. It was hard to endure. Almost dead-hard. Such cute Siesta embracing him tightly... he wanted to make her his. But at the same time...he thought that it would be a lie. He would be lying about something important.

Therefore, Saito shook his head.

“..saying that, it would feel like a lie.”

“A lie?”

“Yes. Because Siesta is an important person for me... That’s why that...I am not saying that...” he started stammering incoherently.

Did it reach her what he wanted to say?

Siesta thought for a moment... and then smiled.

“Saito-san, remember?”

“...Eh?”

“In Tarbes... some time ago. You promised me to take me back to the other world where I come from.”

“...Yes.”

“What you said that time was not a lie, because I still believe it.”

“Siesta.”

“Then I will wait. It will not be a lie when your feelings will grow...though it could never happen... I’ll wait. Then...me...”

Saying that Siesta was so lovable, that Saito couldn’t help himself and embraced her tightly.

Siesta looked at Saito with puppy eyes and said.

“For only tonight. Hug me tightly...and kiss me. Is it all right? Would it also be a lie?”

“About the k-kiss...”

“Then skip the kiss part.”

Because there was no need to hold himself back now, he embraced her.

Such words of Siesta, should not be said when being rejected. When Siesta reposed herself on a bed, Saito looked down at her. There were no sign of tears on her face. Just a simple melancholy.

Then Saito embraced the girl, who said that she loves him, tightly.

* * *

Siesta had a very nice aura around her. Different from Louise, it was tender, it was an aura of a tender girl. Saito, holding her firmly, spoke about everything and nothing.

About being lost in a forest as a kid.

About his favorite syrup for the pancakes.

About taking a whole-day nap during the holidays.

When he ran out of topics, Siesta piled up her lips.

Then... Siesta passed a small jar to Saito.

“What is it?”

“Magical medicine. I bought it from my saved money. ‘Sleeping pills’”

“Sleeping pills?”

“Right. If you were to drink those with wine, you would fall into a deep sleep.”

“I can fall asleep without those things.”

He said, but Siesta shook her head.

“I did not buy it for the Saito-san.”

“Then why?”

Siesta lowered her voice.

“It’s for, for Miss Valliere... if she would make Saito-san to do something dangerous... then make her drink it and escape while she’s asleep.”

Saito laughed spontaneously.

“Muu... stop laughing already... I am serious!”

“Well, I do not think it's dangerous" Saito said.

The war is a winning battle. Scaring the enemy's main force and making them shut themselves up in the capital without going out... it is said that there should be a lot of soldiers who could revolt too. It was an easy victory for the generals, the officers, the soldiers – for everyone.

“It is said that after losing Londonium enemy morale dropped as well.”

Though Louise has been strangely sent to a dangerous duty... since they failed the other day, there might be no more of that. Besides... Louise does not expect much from me either. So, I do not think that generals will entrust us with an important assignment again.

“But I am worried. My younger brother... my younger brother will also go to the war soon. My brother also said not to worry. But I am worried. And if I start thinking about Saito-san, I become worried too. I can’t leave while being so worried...”

Siesta looked like she was about to burst into tears again.

“Everything is all right.”

“... I have a bad premonition. If something not good were to happen to Saito-san, then I, I...”

Saito firmly held Siesta close.

“Saito-san...”

“Siesta, calm down. It’s all right. Everything is all right. When you’ll return back to the school, please make the stew for me again.”

Siesta nodded ‘Yes’ and smiled.

The flame of the fireplace trembled gently.

The snow was falling outside, reflected in the moonlight it bathed the world in silver light

“...An argent advent festival.” Siesta said.

“What is this festival enshrining?”

“Founder Brimir - the festival celebrates the day when he landed on this ground.”

“But today marks... the start of a New Year. Does this festival enshrines New year as well?”

“Indeed. The day when founder Brimir landed on this ground became a New Year day too.”

He remembered Louise.

The user of founder’s element ‘Void’...

Why such great magic power was given to a human... was it a blessing or a curse, contemplated Saito.

* * *

In her own rented room, with a blanket over the head, Louise was waiting for the familiar’s return. Though it was a middle of the night... Saito was not returning.

Outside the window...the snow stopped falling a while ago...

Thick layers of snow, illuminated by the two moons, dyed a whole town in silver.

The thought of the two people together watching at this beautiful scenery right now made her body burn with jealousy.

“Muu, I don’t want to know.” she muttered hugging her knees.

I can’t permit Saito to hurt me this much.

- Knock knock* someone knocked against the room doors. He came back, she lifted her head. Her face softened.

However... it wasn’t Saito’s voice that came from the other side of the door.

“It’s me, Miss Valliere. Can I come in?”

It was Romalia’s Shinto priest, Julio’s voice.

“Did something happen? It’s midnight already.”

“I have to talk with you about something.”

Once the door was opened, the handsome Julio was standing there with a smile on his face.

When entering the room, Julio gracefully bowed.

“Something to talk about?”

Julio silently took Louise's hand. Her body started to tremble spontaneously.

“Relax. I won't do anything strange. Royal ring is what interests me.”

Louise looked doubtful... but, deciding not to refuse, she thrust her finger out.

On the ring finger of the right hand, the ruby of the water, given by Henrietta, started to shine. Legendary ring, used to read founders prayer book...

“Beautiful blue... Have you wondered?”

Louise tilted her head. What was he talking about?

“Why it is such blue ruby?”

“That...” Louise faltered. Once asked about, it indeed was mysterious.

“It is called ‘The ruby of water’ gem, I know.”

Startled Louise looked at Julio.

“Julio, you...”

“The ruby of water is vivid blue, the ruby of wind is transparent, the ruby of earth is brown...”

Louise set up the wand.

“Who are you?”

“I'm a Shinto priest. Really, just a Shinto priest of Romalia. Pope messenger. Well, I'll continue the lecture. The legendary gems are called rubies... even though they are not really red. It's because they are said to be made from Founders blood. However, it is unknown, if it's true or not.”

“It's very detailed.”

“Aah. We study a lot of things for divine purposes in Romalia. One with nature and learning. It makes me be me. The gems were given to Halkeginia long long time ago... Water to Tristain, wind to Albion, earth to Galia... and fire to Romalia.”

“Eh?”

“I'm searching for Romalia's ruby of fire. As the name suggests, it's a red gem that looks like fire. There is a strange story concerning this ruby. It was stolen from Romalia... and rumors said that Tristain had a hand to it. Have you heard about it?”

Louise shook her head. She never seen nor heard about such thing.

“You are not lying?”

“Yes. I can not stand lying.”

“Then I guess that's the way it is.”

Julio gave up suddenly and sat on the bed.

“Are there more stories left to tell?”

“Your story.”

“My story?”

“I'm very interested”

He gave a charming smile. A smile that makes every girl helpless. However, Louise was not in a mood today and did not want to see that handsome smile at all.

“This late? I’m sleepy.”

“We could sleep together.”

Such over confident attitude ticked Louise off.

“It’s arrogant.”

“Julio Cesar is not my real name. It’s a name of an ancient great king of Romalia.”

“Why did you take the name?”

“I was abandoned. I grew up in the orphanage. I was a leader among other kids, therefore, I was nicknamed after the great king Julio Cesar. Because it was troublesome, I introduced myself this way as well. Arrogance is inborn.”

“Will you leave already?”

Julio stood up.

“Surely, sooner or later... You will be interested in me. I promise.”

Louise pointed to the door. After bowing, Julio left the room.

“...why are all men so arrogant?”

Louise lay back to bed and waited for her familiar return.

However, Saito did not come back.

Chapter 8 – King Of Gallia [PREVIEW]

Gallia kingdom - the large country that has the highest population in Halkeginia. The population is about 15 million people. Gallia is an advanced country in magic... there are a lot of nobles too. Its main capital Lytts was the biggest city in all Halkeginia.

The city is positioned on the banks of Shire river that disgorges into the ocean. The so called “Old Town” developed significantly. However, the political center of Lytts, is not located there now.

It is located on the left bank of the river, rather away from the city, in a huge palace of Versailles. Not only the palace, but also the garden of Versailles was elegant and complex, creating various shaped lines in front of the building.

This garden and building were expanded by the hands of the architects and the gardening masters invited from all over the world. All the growing cultures were used to change the outlook of Versailles.

Inside the Versailles palace, there was a building of particularly great dimensions. The royal Gallia’s family had unusual blue hair color. In order to imitate this color of the hair, the building called Grand Tower was made from blue bricks.

In that Grand Tower lived a man who had control over the 15 million lives of Gallia’s kingdom.

He was Joseph – king of Gallia.

His blue hair and blue beard framed his face, making it look breathtakingly beautiful. Tall and muscular he looked like a living statue. Though he was 45 years of age, he looked youthful in every way as if only hitting 30.

This beautiful face of a handsome man had a strange look on it.

Surrounded by two pages, he looked rather bizarre.

Lady’s voice came from the other side of the damask.

“Your Majesty... Your Majesty! The one which you looked for was found and came!”

Joseph elbows his way towards the entrance in the room. A beautiful lady stood there surrounded by the blooming roses. Joseph’s face started to glow.

“Mrs. Molliere! Mrs. Molliere! You are the best!”

The lady who was called Mrs. Molliere presented a box to Joseph.

“Besides His Majesty’s Troops.”

With eyes sparkling like boys, Joseph opened the box. Once looking inside, his face glowed even more.

“This! This is ancient Kaap period’s heavy magic knight! Such an excellent article! Mrs. Molliere, you are a wonderful person!”

Taking out the about 20 centimeters sized knight doll out of the box, Joseph gave a joyful voice.

After that, he took Mrs. Molliere's hand and guided her to the center of the room.

“Saahsaah, I want you to look at this! It’s ‘My World’!”

All over the room was made into one huge miniature garden. Mrs. Molliere pop-eyed.

It looked like a map imitating Halkeginia. A huge model.

“Oh dear! What a beautiful miniature garden! It is wonderful!”

“The work masters from the whole country were called to make it! It took as much as one month to

complete!”

“Is this a latest play model? Have you gotten tired of the chess?”

“Nononono. I am not tired!”

“Oh dear! May I ask what is it? I always thought it was strange for it to be fun.”

“Why?”

“Because, there is no opponent hand. Enemy's horse and ally's horse move according to you, what fun is there in that?”

“Sadly as you can see there are no opponents around here.”

Mrs. Molliere laughed bitterly. Though the king was rich and had pretty face he was often despised because he was not skillful in magic. He was called an imbecile and stupid. Therefore...the king who spent an obscure boyhood, became crazy in the solitaire. He highly devoted himself to the chess.

“The chess, have no changes from the original formula, it follows a certain pattern to focus on. But this play is different!”

Joseph said, pointing at the miniature garden.

“Geographical features are made following reality - the horses, spearmen, bowmen, musketeers, knights, dragon knights, artillerymen, warships... all made imitating the original army, fights as well! To decide cavalry's victory or defeat dice is used! As a result the outcome is always different and gives you a feeling of an actual combat!”

Mrs. Molliere was interested in playing the war together that the king spoke so fondly about, though she couldn't really understand it... She was glad seeing his happy face.

“Then can I too be one of Your Majesty's bodyguard troop?”

“With pleasure. Knight of the flower bed. You'll make a splendid knight.”

Joseph placed the knight doll that Mrs. Molliere has brought on the miniature garden. Jokingly, Mrs. Molliere bowed.

“Oh dear! Honorable Gallia knight of flower bed? I will be begrudged by everyone!”

“A toast for the most beautiful knight leader in the world!”

Joseph lifted up the cup at his side. A page ran up and filled it with wine. Then the page filled Mrs Molliere's cup as well and passed it to her.

“And in this play, Your Majesty will be both - friend and foe?”

The woman asked gracefully drinking from the cup.

“Obviously. Haven't I told you? In this Halkeginia game I am not a figure. I and setting up of the strategy... A clever, exact strategy! That's how it is. Oneself who is triumphant is crushed by the hand of oneself... Like I said I am setting a play for this sandplay stage, like a playwright.”

“Oh dear, this miniature garden is really precise.”

Mrs. Molliere who was taking a long look at it felt admiration. Hills, mountains, rivers...Ups and downs are applied to match real geographical features, even the small buildings in the city and the village are detailed. On a pass stood a soldier doll.

“What kind of drama unfolds here? Please explain it to me more.”

“Currently, that single blue army occupied this city.”

Joseph pointed at the city in a round rampart.

“Now it and the Red Army, which shut itself up in a city here, watch each others movements.”

He said pointing at the city standing on left from there. The city was lined with the building models of great dimensions. Many doll soldiers were placed there. There were also placed a few monster and dragon figurines. There were also ship models.

“Now that’s where it gets interesting. A blue army is reveling to a victory! But Red Army uses an unexpected ‘Trump Card’ and reverses it!”

Such a child, Mrs. Molliere muttered in her mind. Domestic affairs and diplomacy were neglected due to king’s craziness... These are the rumors. And they were not wrong.

Joseph smiled and took the doll from the miniature garden.

It was a tall and slim female figure with dark hair.

Joseph placed the doll to his ear.

And, as if the doll spoke to him, Joseph nodded many times.

After that, Joseph spoke to the doll.

”That's right! Oh yes! Plans are underway! This is a colorful and fun plan indeed! Oh Muse! Muse's more than cute! Take a reward! However, now it's "stuffed"! I want to grab the toys, dolls, even more than I already have! I think it's time to get the plan underway!“

The look that Mrs. Molliere gave the Joseph who was talking to the doll was full of pity. He was not a king, he was not an owner of the pining pretty face, it was an eccentric behavior of the one whose heart never was never loved.

Compared to his younger brother who was good at everything... he was exposed to throne threats... to the whirlpools of political strife...which troubled Joseph mind eventually.

“You Majesty, Your Majesty... Aah,Your Poor Majesty...”

Mrs. Molliere with a theatrical gesture patted Joseph's mandible. Joseph gently embraced Mrs. Molliere.

“Aah, Your Majesty... stop with the pranks...”

“Well, you see a dramatic reversal, is the attempt to end the game. It must be decided – victory or defeat.“

While watching at the two cities Joseph mutters... and called the page.

“Throw it.”

Page nodded and threw two dices. Joseph looked at the fallen eyes and nodded.

“Oooh, seven! Delicate number! Hmmm... In this case...”

After meditating for a while, Joseph called the minister.

“Minister. The imperial rescript.”

From the shadows a small man showed up and bowed.

Joseph lightheartedly informed the minister moved the horse in the miniature garden.

“Summon the fleet. Blow off Albion’s enemies. You have three days to prepare.”

“As you wish.” not showing any emotions, the minister bowed and left.

Mrs. Molliere started trembling while watching the display in utter shock.

It wasn’t a miniature garden play anymore.

Just now, the instruction to a real war was given.

“What’s wrong Mrs. Molliere? Are you cold? Page, put more wood in the fireplace. The madam shivers.” Joseph ordered page in a steady voice.

“Your Majesty... Ooh, Your Majesty...”

“What is wrong madam? The leader of the Gallia flower bed knight corps cannot embarrass herself with such cowardice.”

* * *

On the day when advent festival started... thirty leagues away from the snowy South Gotha city, figures, wrapped up in dark clothes, walked.

“I’m getting used to...mountain walks.”

Muttered a tall man. A dauntless face peeped from the opening of a deep hood.

It was Wardes. Fouquet's face popped up next to him.

They were sent here as Sheffield’s guards.

However, Fouquet had another reason to be here.

“Matilda of South Gotha - I think I heard this place’s name from somewhere before.”

Wardes said to Fouquet, who answered back while stepping briskly.

“So nostalgic. I never thought I will be walking through this mountain path again.” She gave out a white exhalation.

“Is it still a territory of South Gotha?”

“The ‘City’ also includes this mountain range.”

“This land belonged to you as your home?”

“City council has been in the rule. Sort of like viceregal.”

“Still, it’s considerable.”

“I am guiding to the land from where I was driven out long time ago. Such irony.”

“Your father, I know that he somehow shended Albion’s royal family... But why was this land and the tittle taken from you and your father?”

“That’s royal’s family lies.”

“Lies?”

“Indeed. My father dutifully served to Albion’s royal family... But once royal family told ‘Give it’ and he didn’t.

“Haah, and what was that?”

Fouquet laughed teasingly and looked into man's face.

“I’ll tell you only when you’ll tell me your mother’s story.”

Then Wardes turned his face away. Fouquet snuffled in dissatisfaction.

“Hey, Jean-Jacques Wardes, whom do you love more – me or your mother?”

But then Sheffield, who was walking behind, called them.

“How close is the nearest river?”

Fouquet stopped, squat down, elbowing away the snow...and touched the soil. Fouquet, who was a

triangular earth element mage, understood the soil well. Besides, because she grew up in here, she understood the earth here even better.

“Far. But it is not the only water source... 1/3 of City wells take the water from the mountains.”

“That would be enough.”

Fouquet elbowed her way through bush... and reached an cracked rock. Though the snow covered it, the water was visible from the crack. Luckily the center was not frozen.

Sheffield took out the ring from the pocket. Wardes and Fouquet recognized the ring from the first sight.

“That... isn't it Cromwell's ring?”

Fouquet muttered. Sheffield shook her head.

“No, it is different from Cromwell's ring.”

A secretary calling emperor by the name? Wardes and Fouquet exchanged the looks.

“What are you going to do with the ring?”

Sheffield smiled. Because it was the first time they saw her smile, Wardes and Fouquet were perplexed.

“Water is considered a living thing and the ring of Andvari has power to control it... as it's an element that looks like water spirit. Or should I say it's almost identical.”

“Hmm.”

“Water spirit's tears are expensive material used in making various potions. The power of water rules the composition of the body... with a potion one can manipulate both – body and mind.”

“It's a nice lecture. Now then, tell what on earth you are going to do with it?”

“The power of water to condensate... In other words, I can manipulate the a single town with this...”

Sheffield's body began to glow

Wardes remembered this light. The left hand of the Louise's boy familiar glowed in such light as well. Immediately after that ... his left arm was chopped off.

On Sheffield's forehead, half covered with hair and ancient rune glowed.

Wardes screwed up his eyes.

“What are you doing?”

Sheffield did not answer anymore. She seemed to have been concentrating herself. She thrust out the hand with the ring towards the water. Gradually, the ring began to shine... and melt.

It looked as if... it was melted by the heat of Sheffield's body.

A melting drops of Andvari ring began to trickle down... and then a strong stream of water broke through the crack and flowed towards the city of South Gotha.



Chapter 9 – Rout [PREVIEW]

It was the tenth day of the advent festival, and everything looked like usual.

Thanks to the continuous snow, the town turned into a world of silver.

Groups of two Tristain soldiers were patrolling in town, and currently one of the soldier called the other.

“Hey, aren’t they from Rossa’s patrolling unit?”

“Indeed. But what are they doing here?”

One of the patrolling colleagues group was standing in front the inn and doing something in an surreptitious manner.

“Hey!” one called out. However, there was no answer. They just kept on working silently.

“Isn’t that a bag of gunpowder?”

One muttered in a hasty voice. And indeed a few sacks of gunpowder were placed there.

Rossa’s patrolling unit soldiers were carrying bags

to the inn.

“Hey! It’s a hotel not a warehouse. Navarre’s unit soldiers are staying in there. It’s too dangerous to bring such easily explosive things inside.”

He approached and tapped soldier’s shoulder. But the face that turned around shocked him. It was an expressionless and soulless face. Sensing something evil in that face, the guard set up a spear.

“Hey! Put the bag! Put!”

At that moment, another soldier pulled out a pistol from his belt and shot the guard down.

Another guard tried to ran away screaming. But a dagger, thrown by the first soldier, sank into his back. The guard fell down with a thump.

Then they silently returned back to placing bags into a hotel.

Then a match cord was inserted and ignited with a flint.

After a few seconds, with a huge explosive sound, the inn and all resident soldiers were blown off.

* * *

Located in the city’s prime block, on the second floor of the inn coalition, forces leaders were discussing the future strategy of the invasion.

“The truce will end tomorrow. Carrying the replenishment goods must be finished by tonight.”

Chief of the general staff Wimpffen reported while looking at the parchment on the table.

“It will be on time. But I thought that during the truce Albion would try a surprise attack...”

“You think the other side does not have the same problems? They needed to buy time because

enemy preparations were not complete. That's why they settled for the truce so easily..."

Marquis Handenburg said gloomily. Wimpffen gave him a piercing glare. De Poitiers stepped between the two. As the main commander he understood the necessity to buffer subordinate generals' conflicts.

But then...someone knocked against the door.

"Who? We are in a military council." Said Wimpffen.

"A delivery from royal family. It came this morning."

The delivered goods were a gorgeous punnet where royal arms have been carved. A letter with financial minister's stamp was attached to it. The moment he saw it, the complexion of De Poitiers changed. He started to read the letter voraciously. After finishing reading, De Poitiers muttered cheerfully.

"Finances minister congratulates with premonition!"

De Poitiers with his digit opened the box top. Wimpffen and Handenburg looked into it as well. Once seeing what was lying in the box, both of their eyes popped wide.

"Ooooooooooh! Field marshal's cane!"

Indeed, it was a splendid field marshal cane that was carved from the ebony with golden royal family's crest on it. Staring at his own reflection on it, De Poitiers gave a joyful cry.

"Normally, there should be official regulations to pass. 'This cane is reminder of the successful victories under your command.' With a congratulation note from finances minister. Though the war has not ended yet, Allied Forces had successive string of victories now. The enemy army shuts itself up in the capital and did not come out. Encircling and winning a final victory was only a matter of time. The last decisive battle and it is said, and confirmed by finance minister's signature, that I will command with the field marshal cane."

"Congratulations, Your Excellency." Handenburg and Wimpffen shook hands.

"Well... with all what has been said it is all in my grip. We cannot get too careless now, no carelessness!"

De Poitiers said, but could not hide a wide grin on his face.

Booom! Boom!

At that moment sounds of loud explosions resounded behind the window.

"What's happening?"

With a suspicious expression on his face, De Poitiers approached the window, still gripping the field marshal cane.

The window was facing the plaza. There soldiers ran around pointing fingers at something. He noticed emblems on their capes.

"Aren't they from the La Shien unit?"

It was eastern block, while these patrolling units were responsible for the western side of the town. Why they are here? Moreover, why they are fully armed...

Marquis Handenburg stepped next to De Poitiers as well.

"They mustn't be soldiers from my army either. I did not gave an order to march..."

Then they both looked at each other...

Soldiers turned their guns aiming towards the two people standing at the window.

And then a sudden volley came.

The last thing that De Poitiers saw was a sight of the field marshal cane riddled by bullets, shattering it into small pieces.

Frozen from shock, Wimpffen saw De Poitiers and marquis Handenburg, who stood by the window, fell. He could not understand what was happening.

The next moment officers jumped into the room.

“Revolt! Revolt started!”

“Revolt?”

“Rossa’s unit, La Shien’s unit and part of Germania’s army stationed in towns Sai district caused the revolt! Their clashes with our army are happening in various places! It’s too dangerous to stay here!”

Then officer saw shattered pieces of window and lying bodies of De Poitiers and marquis Handenburg, and stood upright in front of Wimpffen.

“Y-your orders, Supreme Commander!”

* * *

The breaking down of Allied Forces stationed in City of South Gotha happened fast.

Commanders were surprised by the sudden revolt. Or one maybe one should say that the cause of the revolt was what made them confused. More so, because there were no reports about discontent rumblings from soldiers, nor disorders.

It’s as if revolt really started from nothing.

Soldiers were at a loss as well. Comrades-in-arms, with whom they fought and celebrated victories together until the other day now attacked them with lifeless expressions and weapons in hands.

“Shoot!”

Even if the commanders shouted so musketeers could not pull a trigger, bowmen could not shoot the arrows, spearmen could not throw spears.

“...We c-cannot shoot, sir!”

“No! You idiots! Revolts are part of the enemy king’s army!”

Though the commander tried to cast a spell at slowly approaching expressionless soldiers... he saw a commander in their front lines and shook his head.

“Maurco! It’s me! Maurice! What are you doing! Why are you turning your wand at us!”

The only answer was a bullet. It hit the ground at his feet, and the commander ordered to retreat.

“Damn! Retreat! Retreat now!”

“W-where to retreat?..”

“As if I know! Retreat anyway!”

In the morn, the defensive lines was broken by the king’s army. [Editor's Note: I wonder what that 'morn' means]

And...finally, a redoubtable report was brought by the dragon knight scout.

It said that Albion’s main army of Londonium began to move, aiming straight to the City of South Gotha.

On the outskirts of the city's temporary headquarters Wimpffen took a decision. Obviously, as he was now the main commander of all operations.

“We’ll retreat to Rosais. It’s no use to stay here.”

And the order to retreat was given to the whole army under his command.

* * *

The army excited over the victory that marched forward now returned as a defeated army, reduced to 30,000 people due to revolt. All faces looked exhausted and the mood of despair floated around.

General De Poitiers was a betrayer and organized the revolt, no, the general was killed, they all were manipulated by an unknown magic and were made to kill - within the defeated army, the truth mixed with various rumors.

However for commanding officers and soldiers such rumors helped to survive. Only animal-like survival instinct whirled in heads of men who ran away.

The confusion became even bigger once it became clear that Albion’s main army joined the revolts in pursue.

Troops of Allied Forces postponed in thin and long groups retreated down the highway that lead to Rosais.

Among them, there were Louise and Saito too.

With a sword over his shoulder, Saito called out Louise who was trudging next to him. He hasn’t talked to Louise since the second morning of advent festival when he returned to their room. But even though they haven’t talked to each other for almost ten days... only poignant words came out.

“So where is this honor of the war?”

Louise looked down.

“Look around.”

A group of the officers rode pass them on horses at a full speed shouting “Out of the way! Out of the way!”. Infantry unit, surprised, stood by the side of the road. Musketeer and spearman showed no reaction though. Everyone discarded their heavy weapons as they were escaping.

Long live the king's military victory, we have to win an absolute justice, to honor fallen soldiers have made

“Now they do not think they can survive. Yesterday they all were shouting 'Long live the king’s military victory! We have to win for the absolute justice to honor the fallen soldiers!', and now they are enraged at their own colleagues?”

“I hope Guiche and Rene are alright...”

Saito said looking distant.

Saito woke up with the shouts “Revolt! Revolt!”. He want to a temporary command headquarters... it was already gone. All members ran away. After the messenger with an order to retreat came, they immediately left their weapons.

Saito turned around. Scarron , Jessica, Siesta and all girls from 'Charming Fairies' inn followed after him.

Why such uproar and why the order was given to retreat? He ran after Siesta and other people from the inn followed him.

“Sure I am a honorable royal army man. I do have to encourage the people to escape abandoning me, it is the highest honor.”

Louise kept on trudging.

“Do you understand now where the true honor lies? Do you now understand the meaning behind teachers words? They all did... they just wanted to live, that’s why they tried so hard to escape.

Saito rattled with an aura of superiority. Mostly because he felt too depressed to talk about anything else.

“Disgrace.”

Louise finally opened her mouth.

“Disgrace? I like it that way. The honor of victory! Justice! Made a lot of noise, but in the end nature showed the truth and made them be honest.”

* * *

Allied Forces including Wimpffen who arrived first to Rosais asked for permission to return to their home country. The answer from the monarchic government prefecture that could not swallow the circumstances was short “Withdrawal permission not given. Explain the circumstances in higher detail.”

Half the number of Allied Forces were killed and turned to the other side, De Poitiers was killed? The fact seems not to sound sane. They seemed to doubt if it was a fake report. Is it not a fake report? Wimpffen could not blame home government for that. Perhaps, even I, after hearing such a report will not be able to send permission and to believe it spontaneously.

The defeated army was concentrating in Rosais.

Wimpffen began negotiation with his own country.

He insisted many times repeatedly that the way the things were going they were heading to annihilation.

With much effort he gained the permission to retreat... after a half day. Very valuable half day. The half day that could be fatal for Allied Forces.

When the defeated army begun embarking... further bad news reached from the dragon knight scout. The Albion’s main army from Londonium is moving faster than expected

The way things were going...

“At tomorrow’s daytime, the enemies main army will burst into Rosais.”

He looked at the map and asked the subordinate.

“How long it would take for an army to fully embark?”

The logistics staff answered.

“Until the morning of the day after tomorrow. Though Rosais has giant port facilities for ships, on the land, there can be only a limited number of soldiers at the same time.”

Wimpffen was worried. When you think about it – he needed to start withdrawal preparation before it was permitted. However, Wimpffen was scared for his own neck and did not want to be hanged by the war tribunal.

“It is necessary to stop enemy army’s pace first.”

“40.000...No, with the revolts the number is far greater. Where can we find an army to withstand

it?”

In addition, the bombardment from the air, would pull the withdrawal line to the fleet. Besides ship guns would not help to adjourn the army marching.

Moreover, in order to gain more time, soldiers, who ran away at full speed, lost all they heavy-
amour.

Wimpffen thought.

And... suddenly he had an idea..

“...That’s right. Let’s use ‘it’.”

“It?”

“The trump card! The trump card of my army! Now it’s the time to use it! Messenger!”

* * *

The messenger came to Louise when she waited for the withdrawal embarkation in the tent.

It was evening’s time.

“Me?”

The older soldier seemed to have been in a very great hurry. He was like a living embodiment of the whole Allied Forces – always in a hurry.

“Miss Valliere! Commander Wimpffen calls!”

Only now Louise understood that general De Poitiers and marquis Handenburg were killed. The confusion within Allied Forces was considerable.

Louise went to face the commander, while Saito was sticking around. He had a bad premonition.

After taking the instructions, Louise came out of the commander tent ghostly white.

“What’s wrong? What were the orders?”

Even though he asked, she did not answer.

She looked straight ahead...and began walking towards the other end of Rosais. But not towards the embarkation tent.

She came to the Buddhist temple on the side of the town.... and received a horse from a horse keeper. Then the horse keeper bowed to Louise who tried to ride away.

Saito grabbed the hand of Louise.

“Hey! Where are you going?! It’s not safe leaving the city!”

“Let go”

Louise muttered in a lifeless voice. Feeling that something is not right, Saito shouted at Louise.

“Talk! What were the orders given to you! Hey!”

Louise did not answer. She just kept on biting her lips.

With the other hand Saito took the order parchment from Louise. Since he could not read the letters the only thing he understood was a map.

“Can’t read. What is written in there?”

Louise bit her lip again.

“Talk! What is written in there!”

Derflinger, on his shoulder, read it instead of Louise.

“Aaah, a backup. Not very honorable.”

“Backup?”

“Fufu, buying time for the main force to escape. Alone against enemy army of 70,000. Wonderful, isn’t it?”

Saito turned pale. He muttered blankly.

“What?”

“Quite detailed instructions actually. Hoho, wait on the hill 50 leagues on the left from here. Wait with 'Void' spells ready. Face towards the land route to see the enemy first and keep casting spells until you run out of magic. Neither withdrawal nor surrender are permitted. Haah, in other words, its an order 'defend till the end'. To put it briefly – fight against enemy until you die. That’s what is this order about.”

“...Hey, what is that - a joke?”

Saito said grabbing Louise’s shoulders.

“No one is joking. It’s the truth.”

“Really, are you an idiot? You would die just because our generals told you to? They are treating you like a tool. No, a backup tool. Don’t do that! Don’t do that!”

“Stop being hasty.”

Saito was amazed.

Ahh, this look in her eyes... I remember it

Louise hasn’t changed since the day they met.

Louise still wanted to be recognized.

She entered into this war against her parents’ will because... she wanted to be recognized.

She was nicknamed as a zero-zero, idiot Louise.

Since those days... Louise's dreamed to be recognized by her parents and her classmates. That’s why she applied for the Fouquet search.

However... once the legendary void elements power awoke in her it changed.

She wanted to be recognized for more than just this.

Saito could not really understand it well. Neither could Louise. Therefore he tried to persuade her.

“Be reasonable. For your pride's sake? Look, it is not a safe inn, you are going to die here... Understand? Stop it all right. You are great. I know that. But let's run away. Ok? Disregard such orders and flee. Ok?”

“Where would you run? It’s an enemy's territory.”

“Stop being so prideful!”

Louise looked straight at Saito and said clearly.

“It’s not because of pride. What would happen if I were to run away? Allies will be annihilated. Your maid, all from the ‘Charmin Faeries’ inn... Guiche, Rene – everyone. They might be killed. They might be shamed.”

Saito frowned, realizing that too.

The reason why Louise is so determined... is not just because of her pride.

"I do not want to die. But I do not want for my friends to die either. That is...the true meaning of a word honor. Hey Saito, you kept on saying that honor is stupid but about what 'honor' you were talking about? It's not because of a great honor that one die for others. It is different."

She explained. But Saito desperately kept on trying to persuade her.

"Then, do I also die? Just like you? Would you sacrifice me to save everyone?"

Familiar's oath surely must be different from this!

Louise sadly watched Saito for a while... and shook her head.

"You run away. Don't stay with me."

"What?"

"Return back to Varsenda ship and take your flying machine. Then you and your maid can fly to the east."

Louise's eyes began to moisten. Louise's voice sounded like she was about to cry.

"You... recently asked if you are just a tool for me. Don't be stupid. If you thought I think you to be a tool you misunderstood me. You are you. A free boy from a different world where he should return back. You are not a tool for me."

"Louise..."

Saito looked away and said in a determined voice.

"I understand. I will not try to stop you anymore. However, I have one request before you leave."

"Eh?"

"In my world there is a tradition to drink toasts before separation. You still have some time left, right?"

"Yeah, a little..."

Saito looked around and next to the Buddhist temple he noticed a box of supplies. It must be one of the supplies that was meant to be sent to the South Gotha city, but ended up being left behind. It was a box of wine. He instantly recalled Scarron's complaints about Albion beer.

Saito took one bottle out.

"It will be stolen by the enemy anyway."

Meanwhile Louise stared at the Buddhist temple nearby. Then, she turned to Saito. Her cheeks suddenly turned crimson.

"Hey, Saito..."

"What?"

"Since we are making toasts anyway, I have one request as well."

"Tell me. Ask anything you wish."

But Louise's request... surpassed all Saito's expectations.

"Marry me."

"...Huh?"

Louise, now red from head to toes, shouted.

"D-don't misunderstand! It is not like I l-love you or anything! However... dying before being able to marry is unpleasant. I just want to marry!"

* * *

It was an empty buddhist temple - there were no one inside. When Allied Forces occupied it, all shinto priests, who were in there, ran away.

Leaving the horse tied to the gate, two people entered inside.

It was clean and well swept.

The setting sun reflected through the stained glass, created an solemn atmosphere

Surrounded by this serene silence, Louise stood in front of the altar.

“You don’t like marrying in the Albion?”

Louise puckered up her brows.

“It just brings unpleasant memories.”

“You did this before, right?”

Louise nodded.

“Yes. However, at that time, I did not give my oath.”

“I see...”

Louise looked up at founder's image. Surrounded by the somewhat solemn atmosphere, she knelt before it and offered a silent prayer.

Louise thought while praying.

Why I thought about wedding at such time?

Do I want it?

Just between me and Saito, without anyone else....

After all, I did not give a proper answer to Saito’s confession, there was no time to answer it either.

As this is the end, I am not afraid to show my feelings anymore.

But what are my feelings and why I thought about wedding out of sudden...

Her mind feel in disorder and she could not find an answer.

When she finished a prayer and opened eyes... Saito stood there with a glass of wine.

“Where is this glass from?”

“It was decorating an altar. And I thought god would not mind me borrowing it for such occasion.”

Louise smiled, taking the glass.

“That’s the second time.”

Saito said.

“What?”

“You smiled to me. Now and the time we went shopping, it makes it two times, right? Even though you don’t really want to marry me”

Louise felt happy. Saito was counting her smiles.

“That’s right.”

However, she cannot tell it directly. Straightforward words don't come easy to her. This is frustrating.

But today's her is different.

Louise matched Saito's cup.

"I'm sorry that we won't be able to search for the way to return to your world together."

"Don't worry."

Two people drank their wine.

From the alcohol and embarrassment, Louise's cheeks turned crimson.

"So how do we get married?"

"I don't really know myself."

"Is it all right? It won't be done properly."

"It's all right. It's you anyway."

Not really knowing what to do, Louise clasped Saito's hands.

"Now, give an oath."

"But, there is no Shinto priest."

"Stop complaining. Or do I have to do it for you."

Saito looked straight at Louise and said.

"I love you, Louise."

"Wha...W-what....S-stupid. It's no good if you do not swear."

Being told 'love you' so suddenly, Louise blushed furiously. Her body trembled with happiness.

"I am not lying. I am glad I was able to meet you. Really."

Louise cast her eyes slightly down. I have to say it, now or never, she thought.

"I-I too..."

However, when she was about say that... a sudden drowsiness hit her.

"T-that? I..."

Suddenly the drowsiness became stronger. She could not see anything.

"You, wine..."

She was not able to finish it. Strength and thoughts left Louise's body.

Saito caught falling Louise. He took a small jar out of his pocket. It was the magical sleeping medicine, which Siesta gave him the other day.

"As expected. Magic is strong."

He muttered stepping outside with Louise in his hands. The evening sun almost finished setting and the surroundings became dim.

"Cold..." muttered a voice nearby.

"Aah, familiar-kun."

Next to the gates of the buddhist temple a beautiful boy with blond, nearly white, hair stood supporting himself against the wall with his arms crossed. His blue eyes shone reflecting the setting



sun.

It was Romalia's Shinto priest and dragon knight Julio.

"You were spying on us again. What a bad hobby you have."

"No, I just came here to pray. I am a priest after all."

Julio answered, not dropping his smile.

"Anyway, take care of Louise."

He was carefully hugging Louise close to his chest with his both hands, as if she was a fragile object, and said to Julio.

"Please go. And return safely to the ship."

Saito placed her on Julio's dragon.

"Thank you. Well then."

Julio called Saito to stop.

"Where are you going?"

Saito answered in a nonchalant voice

"I'm running away."

"You are going in a wrong direction. Albion's army is that way."

"I know."

Saito carelessly jumped on a horse, but Julio called him to stop again.

"There's only one thing I want to know"

Saito answered.

"What?"

"Why are you going there? Surely you aren't that foolish to die for honor, right?"

Saito thought for a moment ... then puckered up his brows feeling relieved and shook the head.

"Because..."

"Well?"

"Because of love."

Julio began laughing loudly.

"Aahaha, you sound like true Romalian!"

With a scowl, Saito crossed his arms.

"No, it's not because of love for a woman, but because my inner feeling tells me so."

"Please teach me that meaning if you can."

Saito looks straight up ahead and said.

"I cannot, putting it to words are already a lie. Words can always lie. Only my feelings cannot let me lie about it."

Julio made a funny gesture with his finger.

"Am I saying such strange things?"

"You are not a noble, just like me, right?"

“Yes.”

“Yet you think just like a noble.”

“Are you trying to get under my skin?”

Saito took the reins in his hands, gripped them tightly and kicked the horse’s sides.

And rode towards the darkening road.

Watching his back, Julio smiled and muttered softly.

“You are very clumsy, Gandalf.”



Chapter 10 – The Place of Courage

On a little hill drawn on a map...The dawn brought forth light to the darkness.

The view slowly expands, and the grassland below grew larger and larger.

It is recorded on the map, a rural area approximately 150 leagues south-west outside the city of South Gotha.

After a whole night of riding, Saito finally arrived here. A light excitement covered him. Although he had been riding all night, Saito's fighting spirit and fatigue were restored by the morning light.

In the morning fog, slowly, slowly and accompanied with the shaking of earth, a great army appeared.

Saito stood up, and slammed his hand against the horse he had been riding. The beast that had been chewing grass idly was suddenly shocked, and fled in the direction where they come from.

“You are not going to use the horse?”

Derflinger asked over the shoulder.

“That guy has a life too; it is not just some tool.”

“You have such a good heart, partner.”

Saito asked Delfinger,

“Didn’t you say before, the Gandalf was able to defend a thousand foes alone? 70,000 shouldn’t be a problem right?”

“That is what they say, but it is only a legend, so people tend to exaggerate. Don’t get too hopeful, in reality, it was probably less than a thousand.”

“...why are you like this? Lying to me like that. If you lied to me, don’t tell me the truth. We are already dead, at least lie to the very end.”

On the horizon of the grassland, we can see the advancing army. Although it is an army of 70,000, due the fact they are not marching abreast, it does not appear to be as large. But in reality, all 70,000 are there.

Soldiers wielding weapons, Mages armed with spells, cannons, demi-humans like orcs and trolls, Dragon Knights...Knights riding phantom beasts.

None were missing, all 70,000 were here.

Saito asked with a fear shaken voice.

“Ah, why must I risk my life to charge into that mob?”

“Why are you asking the obvious? Because our ships have to retreat, so we have to buy time.”

“No...I am not talking about this...But, forget it.” Saito let out his breath.

“Last time I was saved by Guiche’s mole, but this time there is no escape.”

“No we cannot. No matter what, just charge in, in a situation like this no matter which direction charging is the same. Aim for the commanding officer, strike down the head, and the body will fall into chaos. You can probably buy them a day or so.”

Saito nodded, holding Delfinger tightly. The runes on his left hand began to glow.

“Let me tell you something, Delfinger.”

“What is it?”

”Can I tell you a story from my childhood?”

“Sure.”

“I, once, saw an old lady being harassed by some punk near a train station, something about the old lady bumping into them. But that time I was just a little chibi, if I wanted to stop them I couldn’t, so I only stood by and watched. That time I thought, if only I was a little stronger, but at the same time, I also sighed. Because even if I was stronger, it does not guarantee I would have won.”

“True”

“No mistake, I am stronger now, there cannot be any excuses. That time because I had no strength, so I had the excuse to not to do anything. The excuse was that I was not strong enough, so I didn’t help. But now, I’ve lost that excuse. Because I am now very, very strong. No matter what, I am Gandalf, right?”

Delfinger murmured lowly, “Um hum.”

“But...all that strength is only external, in reality I am not really any stronger inside. But there is nothing I can do about it, although I am Gandalf the legendary familiar, my body is shaking, I really don’t have any mental preparation. This type of situation is really not for me. Protecting everyone’s honor, I really don’t like it! I’m shaking with fear. I do not want to die.”

“Partner, you are really someone truly brave!”

“This kind of personality will only lead to trouble, fast.” Saito thought about it.

Courage, isn’t this what it is all about?

“Hey, Partner.”

“What?”

“Am I going to die?”

“Probably.”

The boy became silent. Delfinger decided to raise his spirits, “If it is going to be like this, then go out like a hero!”

“Why?”

“Because otherwise it will be a waste.”

Four hundred meters in front of them, they can see Albion’s forward assault force.

Suddenly his body begins to move by itself; they would never know if this was the power of Gandalf, or Saito’s own bravery, or something else...

Saito charged toward the army of 70,000.

The first group of Albion soldiers who found the charging hero was not



Frontal Cavalry, but the owl familiar belonging to the artillery/firearm commander. Because he didn't believe the Infantries, so he decided to personally investigate the matter.

After he verified the situation through his owl, He immediately ordered the firearm squadrons to prepare to fire, because normally during the course of a march, firearm troops do not keep their weapons loaded.

"What? Only one person?"

He was surprised when he found out there is only one person, but he became shocked once he saw the boy's speed.

It is not a speed that can be achieved by a human on foot.

The frontal cavalry also made the same mistake as well.

Because in the mistake with the estimation of speed, just as they stopped the opposition charged right past them. Before the cavalry can even draw their weapons, they were knocked off their steeds.

The only thing the fallen cavalry men can do is hear the sound of the enemy's footsteps, the speed is so fast, they could not even see their foe's image.

Before the soldiers finish loading their weapons, the enemy is already in front of their leader. It is a person armed with a large sword.

The commander, in reflex, tried to pull out his wand, but was sent flying by the sword. Something hit him hard on the side of his head, the commander instantly lost conscious.

The next moment, Mage Knights approached from the sky. They used magic and familiars to track Saito's movement, then released a barrage of spells.

Wind blades, ice spears, and fireballs flew in waves toward Saito, but were instantly absorbed by the sword. Though the Knights were taken by surprise, they did not stop their magical assaults.

The knight commander ordered his men to scatter; in the instant he made that order, a wind blew next to him, where the wind struck, his wand was snapped in half, and a foot slammed into his stomach. Ribs shattered, the pain was so strong the officer could not cry and soon fainted.

Deflinger asked running Saito,

"Why didn't you kill them?"

Saito threw back a short reply,

"I am not a soldier."

"What do you mean?"

"No matter allies or enemies; I will not treat them as tools."

Delfinger sighed.

Saito danced, dodged, and struck left and right, which caused massive chaos within the enemy formation.

Fighting alone turned out to be extremely advantageous.

To prevent friendly fire, the enemy did not dare to use firearms or projectiles, also, with the speed of Gandalf, nothing in this world can catch up.

But...the Mage opponents were still very difficult to deal with.

The endless barrage of magic, although Delfinger could absorb them, but the amount of magic delivered is certainly above normal, and slowly the sword began to lose the ability to handle them.

"Ugh!"

“Left hand?”

“Hum, damn...I can't move it anymore.”

Saito could only wield Delfinger with his right hand, his left shoulder took a deep wound, and a part of his body is now charred by flame, which came from the fireball that exploded near him.

Although the situation is grave, Saito still charged forward, bravely stood tall surrounded on all sides.

Due to the attacks by Magic and weapons alike...Saito's injury became graver every second.

* * *

Ridding on his phantom manticore was the unit's commanding officer, kicked his beast, and prepared to charge. But a sword knocked him off his mount, he saw his manticore struck down. In that instant, his own legs were shattered, collapsed on the ground.

The commander for the firearm division ordered his men to prepare for a maneuver, thinking to surround this wind like enemy in an instant, but the enemy leaped over the formation, and struck the commander's head with his sword, sending the man instantly into oblivion.

The young commander in charge of the Archers hastily ordered his men to fire, but the arrows could not reach their foe, but instead struck down his allies instead. In the chaos he manages to hit his foot.

The chaos with the forward guards became progressively worse. General Hawkins received reports that completely boggled him. The communications he received were completely a mess.

Some say, the enemy is a single rider.

Some say, the enemy is a Magician.

Some say, is a part of the enemy army.

Some say, is elvish Magic Knights.

Some say, is a elvish division...etc

But, the general, a veteran who survived a hundred battles felt it is a single foe.

An enemy with the speed of the wind,

An enemy with the strength like fire,

An enemy unshakable like the stones of earth,

An enemy elusive like the wave of the sea.

“I don't like it,” General Hawkins muttered.

* * *

Just as Saito broke the wand of an officer of middle rank, the boy spotted a group of mages. Since so many mages were protecting a single individual that mean...

“That guy must have a pretty high rank...” Delfinger added. But even through Saito heard him he could not do much, his body begin to be paralyzed by the pain. Very soon he wouldn't be moving t all.

Saito must save the energy from his breathe.

Just to take down one more Officer...

Just to cause more havoc.

Just like this to extend the time, just even one minute, one second, must be taken.

This was Louise's task.

A task my own beautiful master volunteered.

Saito leashed towards the enemy general surrounded by hoards of mages.

General Hawkins stared at the wind blasting toward him.

Truly amazing speed.

He pulled out his Wand, chanted his Magic, in one breathe he summoned a wind blade. But... the enemy's agility dodges it. He could only see the enemy's blade, flying toward his head.

General Hawkins can only see the shadow in front of him, as if trying to brand it under his vision.

His Riders struck the enemy full of Magic bolts, each attaching itself on to that swordman's body.

Although so many bolts should had been fatal, but the wind like warrior never slowed.

Fencer's sword shot up, slamming into Hawkin's body.

The blade's tip reached within 5 cm of his face.

Hawkins, not averting his gaze, stared straight at the top.

But it did not struck Hawkins' face.

As if time suddenly stopped, the Swordman's movement stopped.

Hawkins used his wand to knock the sword away, and the unknown Blademaster hit the ground with a thud.

"Your eminence! Are you ok?"

"General Hawkins!" One of the Knights rode by.

"No bones broken." He answered.

"Combat is over, give me the report"

Reports came in quick succession.

It is absolutely unimaginable a single warrior was able to cause such damage. Lower command, Upper command echelon had 14 wounded, the enlisted infantry estimated injured were around two hundred fifty. The loss apparently, from the entire army's angle, is within the limit of acceptable. But it's effects were significant. The strong Forward guards are now in complete chaos, in the fog of war, many were injured by their own friendly fire, and the story that 'Everything was caused by a single swordsman' had spread among soldiers like wildfire, greatly damaging the morale of the troops.

The forward commander reported with a bitter face: "I am afraid it will take a while to reform the forward command, at least for several hours."

Also, stories continue to spread among the frightened troops, which greatly decreased the army marching speed. The enlisted soldiers were afraid the enemy may hide another swordsman like the one before.

The adjutant slowly murmured to General Hawkins:

"I am afraid we cannot continue today's marching objectives. If the situation continues, we will have to waste half a day...no, entire day of time."

Hawkins lowered his head.

He got off his horse, walked near the fallen swordsman, and took in stock of his looks.

"He is just a boy."

The body on the ground is a black haired, very unusual looking boy.

Looking at him breathing still weakly, but his body clearly took enormous amount of magical damage, it is only a matter of time.

Hawkins wanted to summon a water mage, but after so much injury, it is only extending his suffering. Not even magic is infinite.

Hawkins looked down on the boy, whispered

"I am really jealous."

"Huh?"

"A single warrior stopped an entire army....in the words of history long gone, he is a 'Hero'; I wish I was not merely a general, but a hero."

Hawkin's voice trailed off.

His sub-commander nodded as well.

"What you say is right, but situations like this is results of war, a pity he was an enemy of ours."

"Although an enemy...not even a noble...but I believe he should receive the highest honor and respect."

"I understand your point."

General Hawkins and the Sub-commander both saluted the boy.

"Let's bury him with honor."

He gave his order to his troops.

In that second, Saito's body leaped.

"What the hell?"

Saito's body reached his old speed, and vanished into the forest.

* * *

Once inside the forest... Saito's body fell down again.

Voice echoed in the dark forest.

Not Saito's voice, but Derflinger's.

"Haaah...it was one thousand years since the last time I used 'Master' was it? Though the reason I was able to move... was because of absorbed magic energy. Anyway, I'm beaten already... but partner, you look tattered..."

Saito's body didn't move in the slightest.

"Hey partner. Do you hear me? Hold on in there, I will tell you a nice thing. At that time, that girl wore those black cat's clothes just for you. She wanted you to push her down again."

Derflinger waited for a while.

However, no matter how long he waited, there was no answer.

Once Derflinger's power wore off, Saito's hand lessened its grip. Free from Saito's lifeless finger's, Derflinger muttered with regret.

"...cheh, you can't hear me anymore."

* * *

Louise awoke and found herself on the deck of the Redoubtable.

Because of the wind brushing her face, as well as the sound of the fluttering sail, she finally woke up.

Malicorne and Guiche were staring back at her face.

"Wow, Louise is awake!"

"Good! Good!!"

Seeing friends nodding their heads unstopped, Louise asked in a surprised voice:

"I... why...?"

"We don't know. When the ship departed I found you sleeping here."

"...Here, this is a ship?"

As she watch the moving scenery for a few minutes, Louise suddenly remembered a very important thing, suddenly sprang to her feet.

"I, I must go stop the enemy army. I have to prevent the Albion army from catching up!"

Malicorne and Guiche both stared at her with surprise.

"Stop the enemy?"

"Yes! I have to delay the enemy to buy us time to retreat."

"We already retreated."

"This is the last ship from the Port of Rosais."

"...Oh?"

Louise looked confused as she stared from the forecandle, as the continent of Albion became smaller and smaller.

"How is it like this? What happen to the Albion army that was chasing us?"

"They said only a little longer, they didn't catch up with us."

"Good, Good, this means we can get home safely."

"But when we get back, there will still be a lot of trouble."

Malicorne and Guiche stared at each other, then the two start laughing.

What really happened?

Why did the Albion Army slow their march?

In that moment...she suddenly remembered something more important.

She cannot see Saito anywhere.

Louise ran around the ship in a circle, and met Siesta and her family on the forecandle.

"Miss Louise... you woke up?"

“Don’t talk about it! Where is Saito?”

Siesta’s face turned white upon hearing this.

“I was waiting for Miss Valliere to wake up, to ask it, shouldn’t Saito-san to be with you?”

Louise shook her head, looking at her worried face, Siesta became paler every second.

“Miss Valliere, where is Saito-san? Where, please tell me!”

In that moment, they heard two soldiers talking behind them.

“I heard from a buddy from the Navarre's ship, they said they saw a single person rode off to stop the Albion Army.”

“Haha, stop joking, it is just one person, what can he do?”

Louise walked near one of the soldiers and said

“Hey, what you just said, is it true?”

The soldier was surprised he was questioned by nobility, and showed a face full of shock and stammered,

“Yes, yes. But I don’t know if it is true or not, someone else told me this story, that part is true.”

Louise’s face lost all colors, instantly the color of blood withdrew from every inch of her body. It must been Saito. It is impossible to be wrong. I don’t know what he did to made me fall asleep, then drop me off on this ship... then went off against the Albion army.

Louise ran up to the hedge and screamed

“Saito!!!”

“Miss Valliere, what happened? Please tell me, tell me!”

Worried Siesta pressed Louise.

“Saito!!!”

Louise screamed, jumped over the railing, and then tried to jump toward the ground.

“HEY! HEY! You want to die??”

Guiche and Malicorne saw the situation, and grabbed her before she could leaped.

“Let me go!!! I am begging you let me go!!!”

“NO! There aren’t any of our men on the ground anymore.”

“Let me go!!!”

Louise’s wails and howls echoed across the White Country's sky.

* * *

The Albion army that arrived at Rosais, looked up into the sky and grounded teeth.

They were just a hair away, but now they could not do anything but watch Allied army escape.

They would have continued the chase, but there were no ships left.

After occupying Rosais, Cromwell entered the red-brick base... then, bites his fingernail in anger.

He already had general Hawkins, who failed to accomplish the mission, confined and sent back to Londonium.

“Why Galia didn’t send their soldiers? If they were attacked from both sides by both countries, Allied Forces would have not been able to leave South Gotha...”

He asked Miss Sheffield... who was nowhere to be seen.

Cromwell was nervous after losing a fight. He was afraid to carry this war any further. He was at the breaking point. He was at the point where he was shaking uncontrollably...

Shouts of joy sounded from the other side of the window.

When he stepped up to it...

He saw a large fleet piercing the sky.

On fluttering flags one could see two wands crossed... Galia’s fleet.

Cromwell went ecstatic.

“Ooh! Finally you came! As expected from large country Galia! How many ships are there? But... why did it come now... after the enemy ran away?”

And once he bit his fingernail again, it hit him.

“That’s right! They are going to chase the enemy fleet! That’s good! Messenger here, immediately!”

When he was about to call messenger... the messenger jumped into the room himself.

“Galia’s fleet! It arrived!”

“I know! I saw it myself! Now! Tell Galia’s fleet commander that- ...”

The messenger interrupted Cromwell’s orders.

"There’s a message from Galia’s fleet, Your Excellency!"

“Message? Oh! I see!”

“They wanted to know you whereabouts in order to greet you!”

“Greeting? Is that so, ha ha ha! They are really very cordial! They have a cordial king and secretary, so fleet commander must be too! Now, rise up an assembly flag in front of the door.”

“Understood.” The messenger left.

After a few moments, in the courtyard, the Holy Assembly flag of the Republic of Albion was raised. After that, dozens of ships lined up around the building one next to another. It was a spectacular naval scene.

What kind of greeting that will be? He waited excitedly...

Then, before his eyes, the building’s door opened and people ran out in panic. Why are they running away from here? Just like rats from sinking ship.

He looked up at the fleet again. Hundreds of cannons from the gangway shone at the same time.

Cromwell hadn’t seen anything more beautiful during all 30 years of his life.

Thousands of cannonballs, after an order to fire, hit the red brick building where Cromwell was.

And in an instant, the official base turned into a pile of rubbish.

Epilogue

The left hand of God is Gandálfr, the ferocious shield of the lord. His left hand wields a large sword and right hand wields a long spear: protect me with endless vigilance.

The right hand of God is Vindalfr, the kind hearted flute of lord. He dominated all beasts of life, leading me through earth, sky and water.

The mind of the god is Myozunitonirun, is the book that carries the crystallization of thought. It carried all knowledge and provided advice whenever I was in need.

There was one more person, but remembering its name gave me trouble...

Taking the four disciples, I came to this land...

From outside came the songs of children, along with the dawning lights, a young girl woke up. She slowly and somewhat lazily got up. Her eye-dazzling hair, like a wave of golden sea, like a cloak unraveling through her body. Her hair is so beautiful it would make people gasp, However, if one look closely, her hair would be half as thin as that of normal people. So when such beautiful hair moves, one could almost hear the sound of air itself stroking it and the light from her hair can be absolutely blinding.

Even if you call her hair ordinary, the rest of her body is also very slim.

It was like god himself curved her body. A slim waist compared to which the outlines of big, firm breasts that lifted her nightclothes whenever she breathed, looked even bigger. The young girl wore only a single part of pajamas, and lightly yawned as she woke up.

From the way her skin shinned, the girl's age is about 15 or 16, but her delicate body, which had to be handcraft of a godly being preventing anyone to accurately guess her age.

The girl reached out and opened her window, and a group of children ran toward her.

"Tiffania onee-chan!"

"Tiffa onee-chan!"

A group of children following one another ran toward the window, screaming loudly to this young lady named Tiffania.

It appears this fairy-like beauty is these children's idol.

"Ai Ya! What happened? Jack, Sam, Jim, Emma, Samantha, everyone came together. I listened to your songs and I woke up, you've been singing the same song again, don't you know how to sing a different song?"

"Don't know...!"

"In that case Tiffania onee-chan teach us to sing."

Tiffania smiled, she considered these children to be her little brothers and sisters.

She suddenly realized one of the younger children had a look as if she wanted to say something.

"Emma what happened? Do you have something to say?"

The young girl called Emma shook uncontrollably.

"That..."

"Don't be afraid, tell me."

"In the forest...In the forest, I went to pick strawberries and I found..."

"What happened in the forest?"

“Emma what happened? If there is something you should told all of us!”

“Why didn’t you tell us?”

“Because, I am very scared...the body was covered in blood...woo..woo” Emma had a look of a girl on the verge of tears.

“Everyone stop picking on Emma. Emma, what happened? Tell big sister?”

“...there, there is someone, collapsed there.”

Tiffania’s face instantly became clouded.

“Again?”

The children began to talk among themselves.

“It is probably that, the war, the war!”

“Yeah!” The children nodded together.

“Because this morning, though that road near from here army of soldiers passed.”

Tiffania threw an overcoat over her pajamas, and leaped out the window.

“Emma, where is it?”

”...there”

The young girl flew through the already familiar forest as if it was her backyard, with the children following behind.

They found a young boy lying by a thick tree, his back against the wood.

Tiffania squatted down and placed her ear to the boy's chest.

“...Still breathing, but the wound is grave, I have to talk care of this quickly.”

Emma worriedly murmured,

“Tiffania onee-chan, can he be healed?”

“Idiot!” One of the other youths yelled. “How can there be an injury Tiffania onee-chan cannot cure? Don’t you know anything?”

“Lets take him back to the village first.”

Boys lifted his body, Tiffania took a closer look at him.

“Black hair, wearing some clothes I've never seen before.”

“He is a foreigner.”

But he don’t appear to be from Tristania or Germania. Just where were his clothes from?

No...Tiffania shook her head and let out a small smile, *though truthfully I myself have a foreign blood as well* Tiffania thought. The soft wind slowly caressed her golden hair.

The hairs around her ears began to flow.

In that moment, we could see her hair revealed a pair of pointy ears.